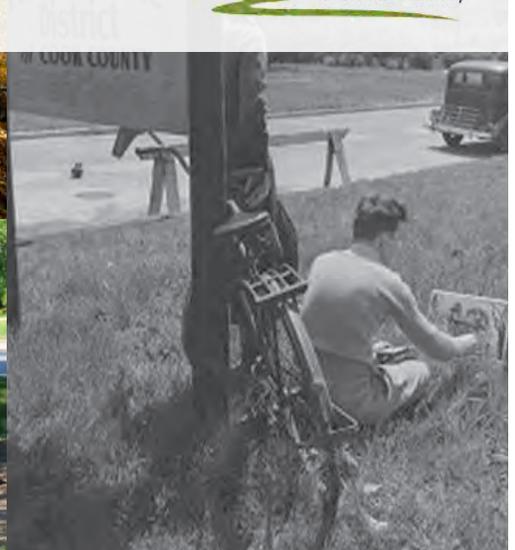


FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY GATEWAY MASTER PLAN

NOVEMBER 2015



**THE
LAKOTA
GROUP.**

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INTRODUCTION

An estimated 40-million visitors come to the preserves each year to enjoy nature, take advantage of recreation amenities and to simply relax.

The Forest Preserves are home to over nearly 70,000 acres of land including natural areas like woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and savannas. In addition the Forest Preserves have a number of recreational amenities including: numerous lakes for boating or fishing, ten sledding hills, six nature centers, five campgrounds, three aquatic centers, nine model airplane flying fields, ten golf courses, over 300 picnic groves, three off-leash dog areas and more.

The Forest Preserves' trail system is also one of the largest and best networks in Chicagoland. Forest Preserves' trails follow the region's major waterways like the Des Plaines River and the North Branch of the Chicago River, and most recently the Cal-Sag Channel. The system includes over 300 miles of multi-purpose trails.

Overall, the Forest Preserves is an unparalleled environmental and recreational asset for the Chicago region and has served as such for the past century. Yet, public awareness of the Forest Preserves along with wayfinding are often cited as major challenges of this resource-rich system.

In recognition of its 100-year anniversary, the Forest Preserves embarked on a multi-year Centennial Campaign to celebrate the system's legacy and to position it for the growth and change needed for the next one-hundred years. In 2015 the Forest Preserves released the *Next Century Conservation Plan*, a restoration-focused vision for the next 25 years.

The *Next Century Conservation Plan* notes:

- Although more than 80 percent of the population of Cook County lives within five miles of a forest preserve, many residents have no idea that a natural treasure is waiting for them right in their backyard.

- Easily accessible entry points can be hard to find and it is sometimes difficult to know what to do when you get there.
- While the Forest Preserves are filled with picnickers on sunny summer weekends, many of these visitors have never been or don't know what to do beyond the picnic shelter.

goals

The goal of this master plan is to define a class of special gateway sites equitably distributed throughout the Forest Preserves to encourage people to enter into the preserves. Gateway sites were first conceived as part of the *2013 Centennial Campaign Plan*, which noted that:

The gateway sites will be located at highly visible, high-traffic locations throughout Cook County. Gateway sites may include well-marked trailheads and trails, outdoor concessions or technology that provides information on ways to engage with that site. A dedication marker or special feature (art installation, etc.) may also be incorporated. There will be an effort to engage more volunteers in the restoration and preservation of the site to help galvanize the next generation of conservation-minded citizens.

A related health-minded goal is to inspire and motivate people to get outdoors and get healthy. This planning effort was made possible, in part, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Healthy HotSpot initiative led by the Cook County Department of Public Health. The Healthy HotSpot initiative aims to build healthy places in suburban Cook County through community partnerships that make healthy living easier.

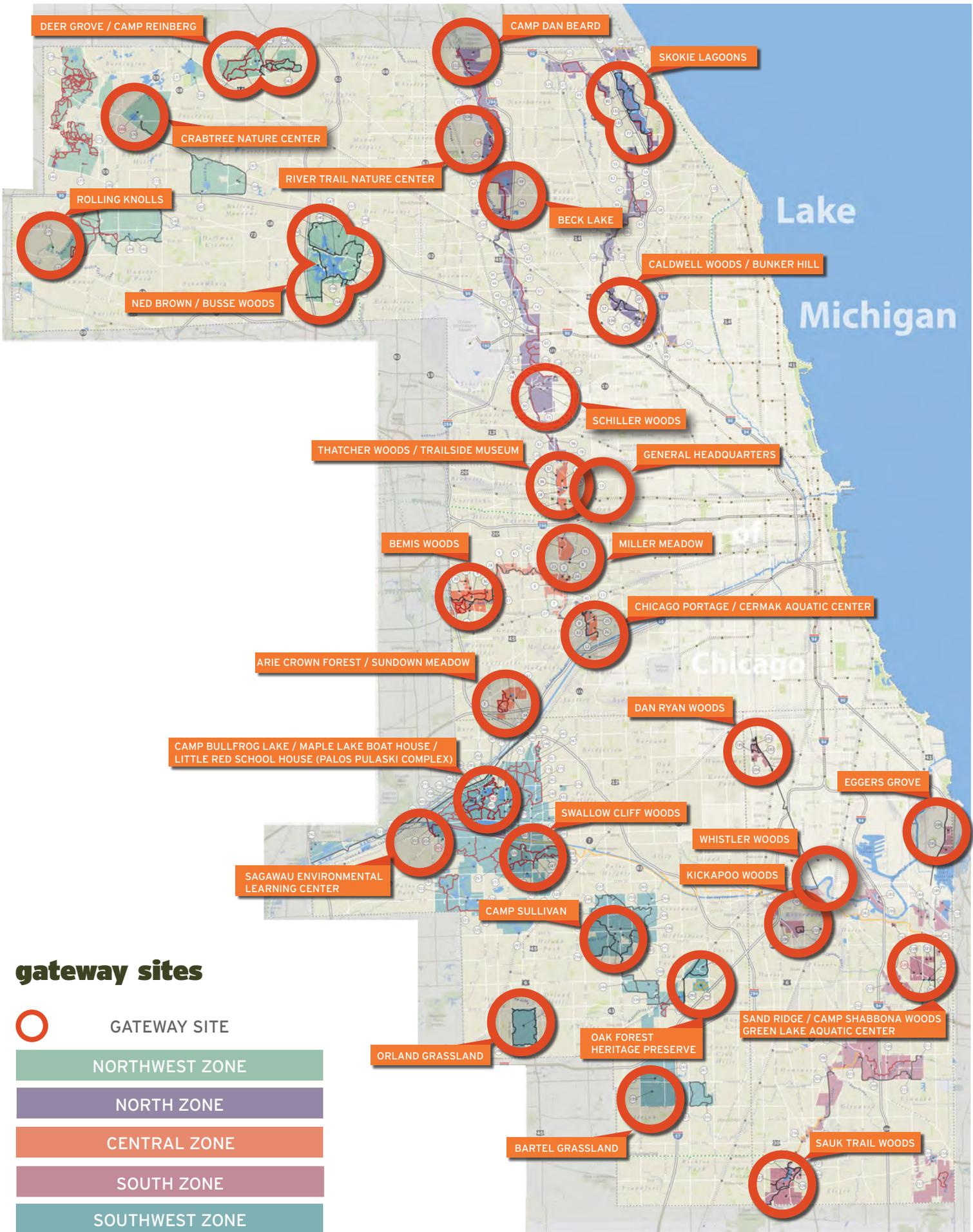
master planning process

A consultant team and staff worked with stakeholders to identify the preliminary gateway sites to be assessed, alternative gateway types and site-specific ideas for gateway site improvements. Stakeholder engagement was conducted in a variety of venues, including:

- **Internal advisory group meetings**
Two meetings were held with twenty-three representatives from nine departments within the Forest Preserves of Cook County.
- **External advisory group meetings**
Two meetings were held with ten representatives from a diverse group of public and private organizations and businesses such as: Friends of the Forest Preserves, Openlands, The Nature Conservancy, REI, Cook County Department of Public Health, Arts Alliance Illinois, and others.
- **Site focus group meetings**
Over eighty representatives and residents from local municipalities, organizations and businesses attended meetings hosted at each gateway site.
- **Stakeholder Interviews**
Four interview sessions were conducted with representatives from the Forest Preserve Foundation, Forest Preserves of Cook County, Beyond the Ball and Friends of the Forest Preserves.

More details on participants and actions taken at these meetings is included in the acknowledgments section and Appendix of this report.





Lake
Michigan

of
Chicago

IDENTIFYING GATEWAY SITES

At the onset of this planning process, staff of the Forest Preserves and the consultant team reviewed potential candidates for gateway sites that met key selection criteria. These were well-known sites located in visible, high-traffic locations and home to a variety of existing activities.

selection criteria

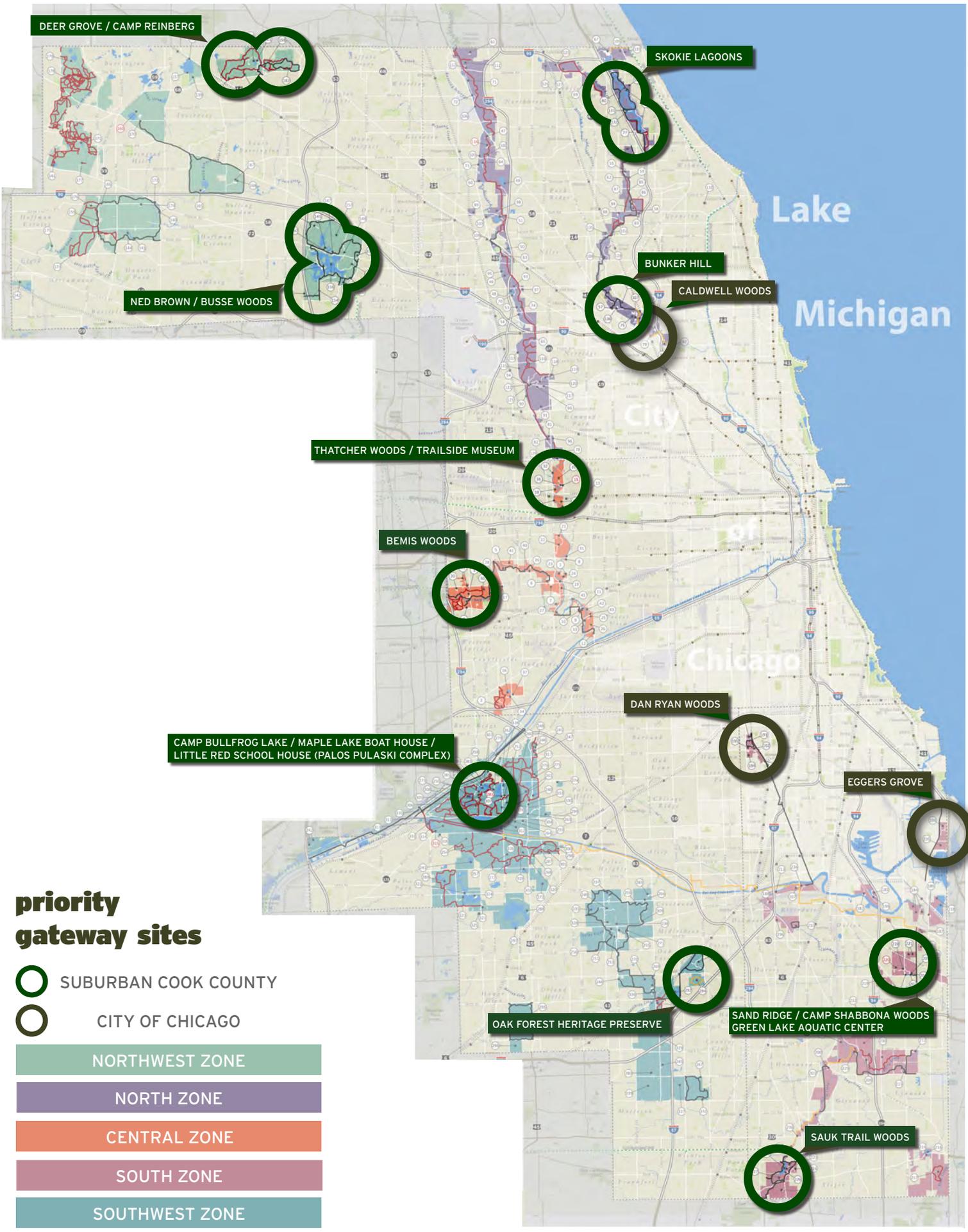
The project team worked with internal and external advisory groups to develop a set of criteria for gateway sites. These sites are special because of their:

- **Site Qualities:** Scenic quality, environmental quality, structured recreation amenities, unstructured recreation amenities, programming (existing or potential), historic and cultural resources
- **Accessibility:** trail access (site or local), trail access (regional), public transportation access, local access, regional access, water access, visibility, adjacency, regional draw, local synergy
- **Site Support Amenities:** Restrooms, parking, concessions, utility access or planned improvements
- **Partnership Opportunities:** existing or potential site stewards, program partners, user groups or sponsors

Sites that most clearly meet the gateway criteria include nature centers, campgrounds and trailhead sites. Other sites received recognition because of special site qualities.

The following sites were determined to meet the selection criteria as potential gateway sites:

- **Northwest sites:** Ned Brown / Busse Woods, Deer Grove / Camp Reinberg, Rolling Knolls, Crabtree Nature Center
- **North sites:** Skokie Lagoons, Caldwell Woods / Bunker Hill, Beck Lake, Camp Dan Beard, River Trail Nature Center, Schiller Woods
- **Central sites:** Thatcher Woods / Trailside Museum, Bemis Woods, Miller Meadow, Chicago Portage National Historic Site / Cermak Aquatic Center, Arie Crown Forest / Sundown Meadow, General Headquarters
- **Southwest sites:** Oak Forest Heritage Preserve, Swallow Cliff Woods, Orland Grassland, Bartel Grassland, Camp Sullivan, Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, Camp Bullfrog Lake / Maple Lake Boat House / Little Red Schoolhouse (Palos Pulaski Complex)
- **South sites:** Dan Ryan Woods, Camp Shabbona Woods, Sand Ridge Nature Center, Sauk Trail Woods, Eggers Grove, Kickapoo Woods, Whistler Woods



DEER GROVE / CAMP REINBERG

SKOKIE LAGOONS

Lake Michigan

NED BROWN / BUSSE WOODS

BUNKER HILL

CALDWELL WOODS

THATCHER WOODS / TRAILSIDE MUSEUM

BEMIS WOODS

DAN RYAN WOODS

CAMP BULLFROG LAKE / MAPLE LAKE BOAT HOUSE / LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE (PALOS PULASKI COMPLEX)

EGGERS GROVE

priority gateway sites

○ SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

○ CITY OF CHICAGO

- NORTHWEST ZONE
- NORTH ZONE
- CENTRAL ZONE
- SOUTH ZONE
- SOUTHWEST ZONE

OAK FOREST HERITAGE PRESERVE

SAND RIDGE / CAMP SHABBONA WOODS GREEN LAKE AQUATIC CENTER

SAUK TRAIL WOODS

priority gateway sites

Thirteen gateway sites were selected for the first round of more detailed planning and implementation based upon input from staff, internal and external advisors and grant funding restrictions. Priority gateway sites are located in suburban Cook County due to forest preserve land locations and grant funding restrictions. Two sites were selected in each zone or region with three additional City of Chicago sites (Dan Ryan Woods, Eggers Grove and Caldwell Woods).

- **Northwest sites:** Ned Brown / Busse Woods, Deer Grove / Camp Reinberg
- **North sites:** Skokie Lagoons, Bunker Hill, Caldwell Woods
- **Central sites:** Thatcher Woods / Trailside Museum, Bemis Woods
- **Southwest sites:** Oak Forest Heritage Preserve, Camp Bullfrog Lake / Maple Lake Boat House / Little Red School House (Palos-Pulaski Complex)
- **South sites:** Dan Ryan Woods, Sand Ridge Nature Center / Camp Shabbona Woods / Green Lake Aquatic Center, Sauk Trail Woods, Eggers Grove

The Forest Preserves intends to develop more detailed plans and implement gateway improvements at a rate of five sites per year for the next five to six years using the design guidelines developed during the first round of design in 2015-2016.



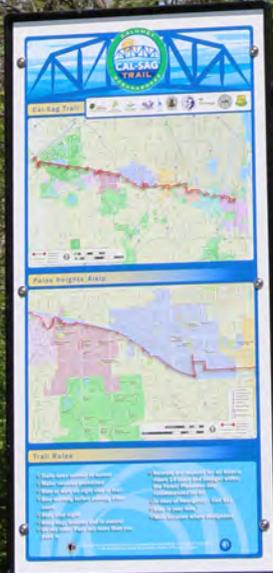
Paved Trail at Bemis Woods



Fishing at Ned Brown / Busse Forest



Boating at Palos-Pulaski Complex



IMPROVING WAYFINDING AT GATEWAY SITES

A well-designed wayfinding system, which incorporates a recognizable graphic brand and facilitates travel for both motorists and pedestrians, can be a very effective way to enhance the overall user experience of a place.

opportunities & challenges

- **Wayfinding hierarchy.** The Forest Preserves' signage is widely recognized by the public as announcing Forest Preserves' properties however, there is no clear hierarchy of wayfinding elements to help visitors orient and find major destinations. The Forest Preserves recently completed a *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan* to address policy, consistency and identity and reduce clutter of signage within the Forest Preserves.

The Forest Preserves has also invested over the past decade in updating their signage system with new site maps, however, the functionality of these signs could still be improved. During focus group discussions, visitors often mentioned feeling confused and disoriented once they were inside the system. Conversely, visitors also cited their familiarity and special relationship with the Forest Preserves as the sole reason for confidence while locating and navigating destinations. Therefore, apprehension for first time visitors is likely and could contribute to a lack of interest and use.
- **Amenities/resources not identified.** Once visitors arrive at Forest Preserve destinations, there is often no clear indication of resources and amenities available to visitors at the site. Improved wayfinding signage may provide a more seamless arrival sequence for first-time and returning visitors, improve the physical appearance of gateway sites, and contribute to a better understanding of the resources and amenities that are available at a particular location. In addition, wayfinding could help visitors locate resources proximate to the site, such as train stations, bike paths, or even near by places to eat and drink.
- **Major starting points largely undefined.** Unlike some park agencies (e.g. The National Park Service) which have controlled access points, a staffed arrival gate and a well-connected internal vehicular circulation system, Forest Preserves' properties tend to have open access, multiple entrances and dead ends. This can create wayfinding challenges for many visitors and can also make the development of a wayfinding system more complex and costly. Rather than providing wayfinding information at a singular main entrance, Forest Preserves' sites must communicate wayfinding information at multiple entrances. Additionally, since internal circulation systems on Forest Preserves' properties are not always interconnected, there are some cases when visitors must leave Forest Preserves' properties and then re-enter at a different location in order to reach a particular destination.

case studies and best practices: implementing a wayfinding master plan

TORONTO PARKS & TRAILS

Similar to the Forest Preserves, Toronto Parks and Trails is a large, highly urban system. Before the Wayfinding Master Plan, Toronto Parks and Trail's signage system had many redundant, duplicated and outdated features. The system was showing wear and lacked consistency and hierarchy. Sign clutter was also prevalent. Additionally, the names of the nearly 1,500 parks were often confusing to visitors. The Wayfinding Master Plan, which was created in 2014, had six scales of interaction focusing around consistency, accessibility, adaptation, connections in and out of the park and celebration.

Toronto's visitor-based, participatory planning method helped identify issues and gaps within the existing signage system as well as links to adjacent community amenities beyond park boundaries. Technology was also used to encourage accessibility, including a mobile application and GPS navigation system for park amenities.

The following levels of wayfinding touch-points were identified by Steer Davies Gleave for the Wayfinding Master Plan:

- **Gateways**
Gateway signage provides an opportunity to consolidate, rationalize and represent welcome and contextual information to form and improve a sense of arrival. They are located at park and trail pedestrian and vehicular entrances.
- **Directional Signage**
Directional signage improve transitions and edges between parks and adjacent municipalities. They are located at decision points, trail and path intersections and secondary park entrances.
- **Park Hub**
Park hub signage is located at inner gateways, pedestrian access from parking and significant landscape features.
- **Community Facilities**
Community facility signage is located at entrances to internal park facilities such as sports fields or community gardens.
- **Trail Markers**
Trail markers provide improved legibility, visibility and direction to key landmarks, facilities and amenities. They are located at trail entrances and exits at frequent intervals and at memorable and easily accessible places.
- **Interpretation**
Interpretive panels help tell the story of a place and direct visitor experience. They are located at view points and significant places of natural, historical, cultural or aesthetic interest.



Wayfinding Signage Concepts for the Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding Master Plan

case studies and best practices: implementing a wayfinding master plan

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service (NPS) provides visitors with a clear series of visual cues to help them navigate and identify the park system without confusion. The NPS also seeks to enhance visitors' enjoyment without undermining the systems rich cultural and ecological resources. The following levels of wayfinding are identified in the NPS UniGuide program:

- **Identification**

This is the welcome moment and first opportunity to engage and captivate potential visitors. The gateway or entry portal gives visitors information about where they are and what to expect when they arrive. The design of these should be appropriate in scale and placed in conjunction with other site amenities to optimize effectiveness. These include park and facility identifications signs.



National Park Service identification signage - NPS UniGuide

- **Motorist Guidance**

Motorist guidance signs should be placed in advance of the desired destination at a distance based on speed of approach, the type and complexity of the intersection and the quality of visibility. These include road guide signs within parks, highways guide signs leading to parks, trailblazers, boundary signs and traffic regulatory and warning signs.



National Park Service motorist guidance signage - NPS UniGuide

- **Visitor Information**

Designed to present information in an easy to read, consistent and engaging way, visitor information signs provide directional knowledge and information about choices offered and various access routes. Scale is dependent on speed and type of transportation. These include facility identification, vehicular entry and guide, fee display, pedestrian guidance and specific visitor information signs.



National Park Service motorist guidance signage

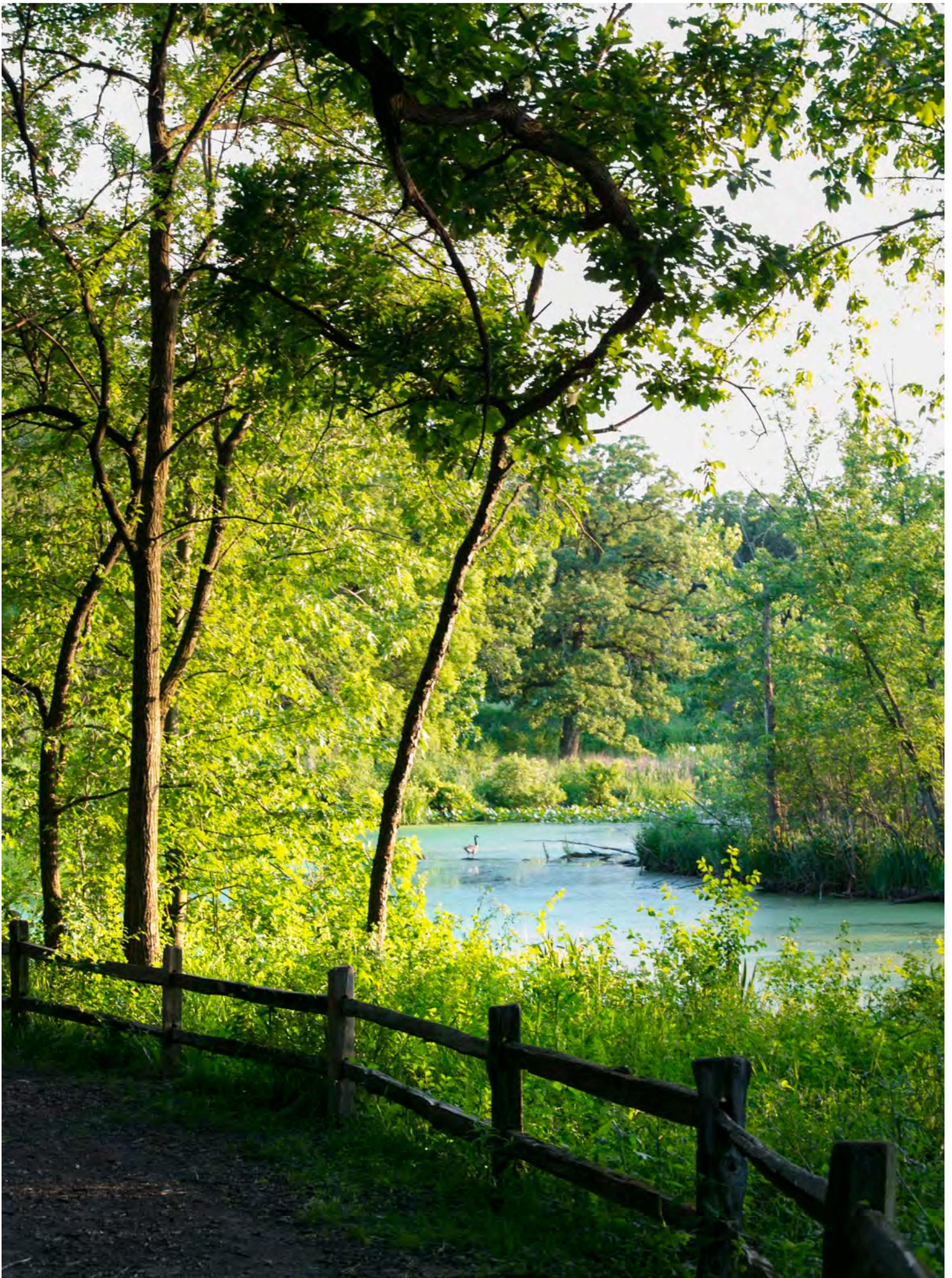
case studies and best practices: implementing a wayfinding master plan

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

The recently completed *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan* includes recommendations on how signage could be improved over the next five years, as well as updated guidelines for sign placement and design. The *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan* identifies zones that distinguish where signs are to be located within a typical grove or preserve. Zones include:

- Identification Zone**
 Areas along roads and property lines that are typically experienced from a vehicle. The purpose of signs in this zone is for visitors to identify Forest Preserves' property.
- Entry Zone**
 Areas along the entry drive before the first parking stall, also typically experienced from a vehicle. The purpose of signs in this zone is to provide the specific name of the grove or preserve and to welcome visitors. Placement of sign standards should be organized as not to detract the driver's attention and create a hazardous situation.
- Orientation Zone**
 Area along the parking lot typically experienced by pedestrians. Signs in this zone should be concentrated in information nodes, located in the most accessible and visible point in the preserve.
- Trail Signs**
 Signs along trails are typically read by a pedestrian or from a bicycle to assist with wayfinding. Signs in this zone regulate pedestrian and bicycle use and provide trail information including the start of the trail, trail mile markers and directions/information about other destinations available from the trail.





improving access and orientation

Implementing a hierarchy of wayfinding messaging, outlined below, will help to resolve problems of orientation within the Forest Preserves. Each tier of the hierarchy addresses visitors at a different stage of their arrival experience, addressing questions at key experiences along the visitor's journey. At each stage of a visitor's arrival experience, different information is shared to help orient and guide them to different destinations.

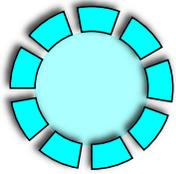
Different scales of standard signage will be developed to address each stage of the wayfinding experience at gateway sites as part of the next phase of this planning process. These signage elements will be appropriately scaled based on how visitors are viewing the information (by vehicle, bicycle or as a pedestrian), and appropriately designed based on the type of information being conveyed.

- **Identity Messaging:**
Boundary and First Recognition
(What is this place?)

Identity messaging occurs along major traffic routes, aiding orientation and awareness prior to the visitor's need for direction. It is the high-speed highway signage that announces the entrance or border of something. This type of signage might appear along major regional roadways and at a number of major intersections that border forest preserves.

- **Wayfinding Messaging:**
Menu of Options - Distances and Directions
(What is here? Where is it? How far is it?)
This level of messaging, while in a vehicle, provides a menu that outlines the options or amenities within the preserve entered or passed by. This type of signage typically appears along local roadways. The menu should identify, for example, where a nature center or other destination might be located and how many miles ahead.
- **Arrival Messaging:**
Announcing the Entrance to a Feature
(Is this the right entrance? Where should I park?)
This is an access point, typically experienced in a vehicle, to a specific area that contains a feature that the visitor is seeking like a fishing lake, nature center or sled hill. This is also a likely spot for special features, such as artwork or enhanced signage, to convey context and personality to the entrance.
- **Orientation Messaging:**
Interpretation and Wayfinding for Pedestrians
(What is special about this place? Is this a place to be active? Where can I get lunch nearby?)
This is the point where visitors have actually arrived. These moments occur once visitors have parked their car and are able to collect site specific information (e.g. a kiosk, map, or interpretive panel). The scale of these elements should be on a personal and human level, rather than vehicular.

the arrival experience



Identity Messaging:
Boundary and First Recognition
(What is this place?)



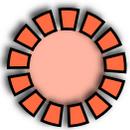
Existing FPCC identity sign



Wayfinding Messaging:
Menu of Options -
Distances and Directions
(What is here? How far is it?)



Existing FPCC directional sign



Arrival Messaging:
Announcing Entrance to Feature
*(Is this the right entrance?
Where should I park?)*



Existing FPCC entrance sign



Orientation Messaging:
Interpretation and Wayfinding
for Pedestrians
*(What is special about this place?
Is this a place to be active? Where
can I get lunch nearby?)*



Existing FPCC destination sign

defining priority destinations

Many stakeholders have expressed difficulty in knowing where to begin their experience at Forest Preserves' properties. This is especially true for first-time visitors who may be looking for a main entrance or a central hub of information where they can learn more about the site they are visiting and the Forest Preserves' system as a whole. As wayfinding at gateway sites is improved, it is important to think about where visitors should be directed. To help address this, a hierarchy of destinations should be defined for each gateway site. To start defining the hierarchy, some questions should be considered:

- What staffed facilities exist at the gateway site such as nature centers, visitor centers, campgrounds, aquatic centers and concession locations?
- Where are popular un-staffed destinations at the gateway site such as trailheads, recreation amenities or cultural features?
- Where are functional site amenities such as parking, drinking fountains and comfort stations located at the gateway site?

Locations that host amenities are usually destination points within the Forest Preserves' system. In addition to considering destination points, one should also ask:

- Are there sensitive natural areas at the gateway site where large amounts of visitors should not be directed?

Once a range of destinations has been identified for each site, a distinction must be made regarding the relative importance of each destination to first-time visitors. The capacity of each destination point to support a relatively high amount of traffic should also be considered. A decision must then be made about each destination to determine if visitors should be guided to it as a primary destination point within the gateway site.

For large, campus-like sites, multiple primary destination points may exist. Dialogue with community members and site users can be a very useful tool for helping to determine the appropriate number of primary destination points at each gateway site.



key recommendations: improving wayfinding

- **Update and implement the *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan* at gateway sites.** The *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan*, described on page 11, should be updated to include recommendations and updated guidelines for sign placement along with design standards for each tier of the arrival experience defined by this plan. Gateway sites provide a focused location to begin pilot implementation of these recommendations. While wholesale replacement of existing signs prior to the end of their useful life would be costly, replacement of dated signs at gateway sites should be a priority.
- **Update site maps to identify primary destination points for gateway sites.** The Forest Preserves have recently revised the system-wide geographic area designations from nine regions to five zones. Site maps and trails maps are also being updated. New maps and promotional material have been recently designed and printed to reflect this change. A plan should be developed for updating grove and site maps in the field to reflect these changes as well.
- **Update site maps and wayfinding markers to identify and promote local destinations around gateway sites.** Gateway sites provide a unique opportunity to better connect the Forest Preserves with neighboring communities and the unique attractions and destinations that they offer. Updating site maps and wayfinding to include this information about proximate transportation, commercial, and cultural resources can create a stronger partnership with neighboring communities and an overall enhanced user experience.
- **Implement recommendations of the *Trail Master Plan* at gateway sites.** Gateways sites provide a focused location to begin pilot implementation of recommendations outlined in the *Trail Master Plan* including the development of trailheads, adding additional wayfinding signage and identifying trail difficulty.
- **Explore the potential for “Brown Board Signs” with the Illinois Tollway and IDOT.** Recreational and cultural interest signs, also known as “brown boards,” include accommodations that are essentially recreational in nature. Requirements include annual attendance of at least 300,000 for urban attractions and annual attendance of at least 200,000 for rural attractions. Another type of brown board is points of interest signs, which provide guidance to two or three facilities that may not individually meet the required specifications, but do so collectively. The Tollway permits no more than one brown board sign per interchange approach. Facilities may provide logos for installation on the signs, but the signs are installed and maintained by the Tollway. Entities wishing to explore the potential for the Tollway furnishing and installing a brown board sign can submit a request in writing to the Illinois Tollway Engineering Department - Chief Engineer. Engineering staff will review the request and obtain information from the requester to decide whether a sign would be appropriate.¹

Additionally, the Illinois Department of Transportation administers a, “Tourist Oriented Directional Signing Program” along rural roadways. These signs are meant to benefit rural areas and can only be placed in municipalities with a population under 5,000. However, the Forest Preserves should consider their application in rural areas to attract and orient potential visitors.²

¹ Illinois Tollway website <http://www.illinoistollway.com/doing-business/information-signage-guidelines>

² IDOT website <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/doing-business/permits/special-sign-programs/>



IMPROVING AMENITIES AT GATEWAY SITES

All forest preserve sites should be places where visitors can depend on a safe and comfortable experience within the Forest Preserves, this is especially true at gateway locations. Improving site amenities such as parking, shade shelters, benches, trash cans, bike racks, accessible restrooms, drinking fountains, concessions, information kiosks and picnic areas supports a positive visitor experience.

opportunities & challenges

Currently, the Forest Preserves have a defined family of “site infrastructure” amenities, but have not rolled out the standard site amenities system-wide. The gateway sites present an opportunity to pilot this defined family of “site infrastructure” elements. Challenges in terms of site amenities include:

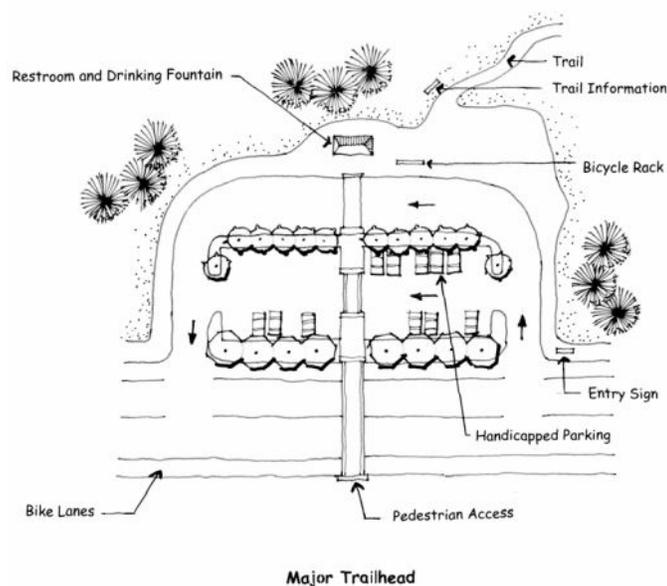
- **Site amenities lack consistency.** Varying and often inconsistent site amenities and furnishings throughout the Forest Preserves make it difficult to create a uniform identity and brand. Implementation of cohesive site amenities and infrastructure has been slow and some sites remain inconsistent and outdated.
- **Maintenance of site amenities.** Currently site amenities are maintained to a good standard of quality. However, maintenance priorities (hardscape and landscape) should be re-examined in order to provide the best use of resources at gateway sites. Additionally, any proposed site amenities and unique amenities within gateway sites must be maintained at the highest quality of excellence. Because gateway sites will be the Forest Preserves showcase locations it is important that the site features not fall into disrepair, which create a negative perception of the preserves and detract potential users.
- **Perception of safety and feeling welcome.** During focus group discussions some participants noted that they perceived the Forest Preserves as being unwelcoming and isolated. Comments were made about perceived safety and improper usage. The Forest Preserves were sometimes described as places the community no longer visited due to these embedded ideas. A concentrated effort must be made to realize the goals of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*, to make the Forest Preserves welcoming and inviting, where everyone feels safe and comfortable exploring the preserves.
- **Landscape should be valued as an amenity.** In many cases the Forest Preserves are not treating landscape as a valuable site amenity. While 80% of the Forest Preserves are dedicated to remaining in a natural condition and 20% toward developed recreational use, balancing the demands of access and usage with preserving and protecting natural areas can be difficult. However, there is an opportunity for highlighting natural areas as site amenities through strategic restoration programs, especially at gateway sites.

case studies and best practices: design standards for trail amenities

MONTEREY BAY SANCTUARY SCENIC TRAIL NETWORK MASTER PLAN

The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan provides a design standards section that focuses on trail amenities such as benches, shade structures, informational signs and trash containers. The goal is to ensure that these elements be located along the trail at strategic locations. The design of these elements and selection of materials such as wood, stone, wire fences, self weathering (rusted) steel, and other rustic materials is intended to reflect an ocean theme in order to reinforce a unique brand and identity for the trail.

Four different types of fencing are presented and instructions regarding proper location of each type is discussed. Trail furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, picnic shelters and bollards are also presented. Guidelines for where these furnishings should be located are clearly addressed.



Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network Master Plan - Trail Design Standards

The design standards designate different types of areas such as trail access / staging areas and rest areas. A checklist of design elements that should be included in these areas is provided, for example:

Trail Access / Staging Areas Design Elements:

- Paved parking (permeable or aggregate base in sensitive areas to filter runoff)
- Information kiosk with a trail directory map / trail information
- Picnic tables, benches
- 911 call boxes (rural areas)
- Drinking fountains
- Trash and recycling cans
- Safety lighting
- Bike racks
- Shade and shelter
- Potential for commercial vending and service (food, bike support, equipment)
- Interpretive signs
- Food kiosk
- Bike shop/station rental
- Charging stations for e-bikes
- Security cameras

Rest Areas Design Elements:

- Trash cans
- Emergency phone
- Drinking water
- Shade element
- Directional signage / trail information
- Benches with backrests and armrests
- Grades that do not exceed five percent (5%)

key recommendations: improving site amenities

- **Memorialize existing standards for site amenities at gateway sites and expand as needed.** The Forest Preserves currently has standards for site furniture, lighting, building construction and user amenities such as water fountains and bike racks. This set of site standards should be memorialized for use at gateway sites and expanded as needed. Additionally, a consistent package of special amenities should be provided at all gateway sites. Design guidelines and site plans will be developed in the next phase of this planning process and these could serve as a prototype for these special site amenity standards.
- **Improve and enhance parking areas at gateway sites where appropriate.** Some primary destinations at gateway sites lack an adequate amount of parking. Additional parking should be considered in these areas. There are also a few destinations where stakeholders have identified an excess of paving and parking. Parking areas at these locations should be considered candidates for additional landscaping or stormwater management integration.
- **Use landscape improvements as a site amenity.** Landscape improvements could be seen as two categories - native landscape restoration and native landscape gardening. Restoration could be the larger setting in which the preserve sits while landscape gardens comprised of native plants could be developed in locations where visitors are more apt to congregate. These gardens could be designed to tell a story and educate the public about their virtues. They could also include educational signs to help visitor's replicate native gardens at their homes in order to support pollinators, improve soil quality and reduce airborne pollen, a significant contributor to asthma and hay fever.
- **Elevate transit opportunities for accessing gateway sites.** While many of the gateway sites are accessible via public transportation, wayfinding and access from the nearest transit stop to a preserve entrance can be difficult. Incorporating site access as it relates to pedestrian usage and public transportation should be an important component of gateway sites and is also a goal of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*. Ideally, gateway sites will incorporate access into their overall design, ultimately focusing on the user experience and accounting for the different types of users: such as vehicles, bikes, public transit users, users with disabilities and neighborhood walk-ins. Site amenities such as bus shelters, benches and trash receptacles should be provided near transit stops. Routes from transit stops into sites should also be identified.
- **Cluster site amenities to enhance access and effectiveness.** Elements functioning together have a greater impact than they would separately. Clustering amenities together creates opportunities for interaction and engagement.



IN 1673 LED BY AMERICAN INDIAN EXPLORERS MARQUETTE AND JOLIEF BECAME THE FIRST EUROPEANS TO CROSS THROUGH THIS ROUTE, ENCOURAGED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ILLINOIS CANAL, AND THE GROWTH OF CHICAGO.

IMPROVING SENSE OF PLACE AT GATEWAY SITES

Gateway sites should ideally convey a sense of welcome, interest, safety and beauty. Many gateway sites also have a storied natural and cultural history, worth sharing with visitors. Making these stories accessible to visitors will help create a meaningful and interesting visitor experience.

opportunities & challenges

Site improvements that contribute to a positive sense of place include healthy, well managed landscapes, interpretive installations, signage, exhibits using a variety of media or even through public art. Perceptions of safety are also influenced by lighting and landscape conditions. Challenges in terms of sense of place include:

- **Increasing natural area restoration.** For many people the first and only image of the Forest Preserves occurs transiently from major roadways, often what they see is a thick curtain of buckthorn or other invasive species. Removing invasive species from natural areas not only allows for native species to grow and thrive, it also creates clear sight lines and allows sunlight through creating a welcoming and idealistic setting. The *Next Century Conservation Plan* calls for the restoration of 30,000 acres of natural area to ecological health, the Forest Preserves has already taken steps to address this recommendation through its *Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan*, which helps prioritize natural areas for restoration work. Gateway sites should also be considered as priorities because they are highly visible and offer opportunities for education, interpretation and programs.
- **More market research/brand analysis.** There is value in continuing to conduct market research to better understand how visitors to the Forest Preserves and non-visitors perceive them.
- **Lack of art policy or guidelines.** Currently there is no policy or design guidelines on the role of art in forest preserves. Art and sculpture can play a role in both drawing attention and engaging visitors as the Chicago Portage sculpture demonstrates. The topic of art was discussed in focus groups and most participants favored expansion of art at gateway sites, although most favored the use of natural materials.
- **Lack of interpretive policy or design guidelines.** The Forest Preserves does not have a comprehensive interpretive policy or design guidelines. Most interpretation has historically taken place at nature centers. In 2014, the Forest Preserves and Openlands began development of new design guidelines for outdoor interpretation at non-nature center sites with significant natural features. Interpretation of sites with important cultural, historical or recreational features is still largely done on a case-by-case basis. As a result, individual preserves' history, importance to the community, values and the breadth of potential outdoor experiences offered are not easily identifiable with visitors. The lack of a comprehensive strategy or policy on how to identify what to interpret creates challenges to implementing interpretive elements at gateway sites.
- **Perception of safety.** Some Forest Preserves' sites struggle with a public perception regarding safety and security. During focus group sessions some community members commented about perceived safety and improper usage of Forest Preserves' property. While many of these perceptions are unwarranted or based on negative press from the past, additional efforts should be made to ensure that gateway sites are welcoming and inviting.

case studies and best practices: natural landscape to improve sense of place

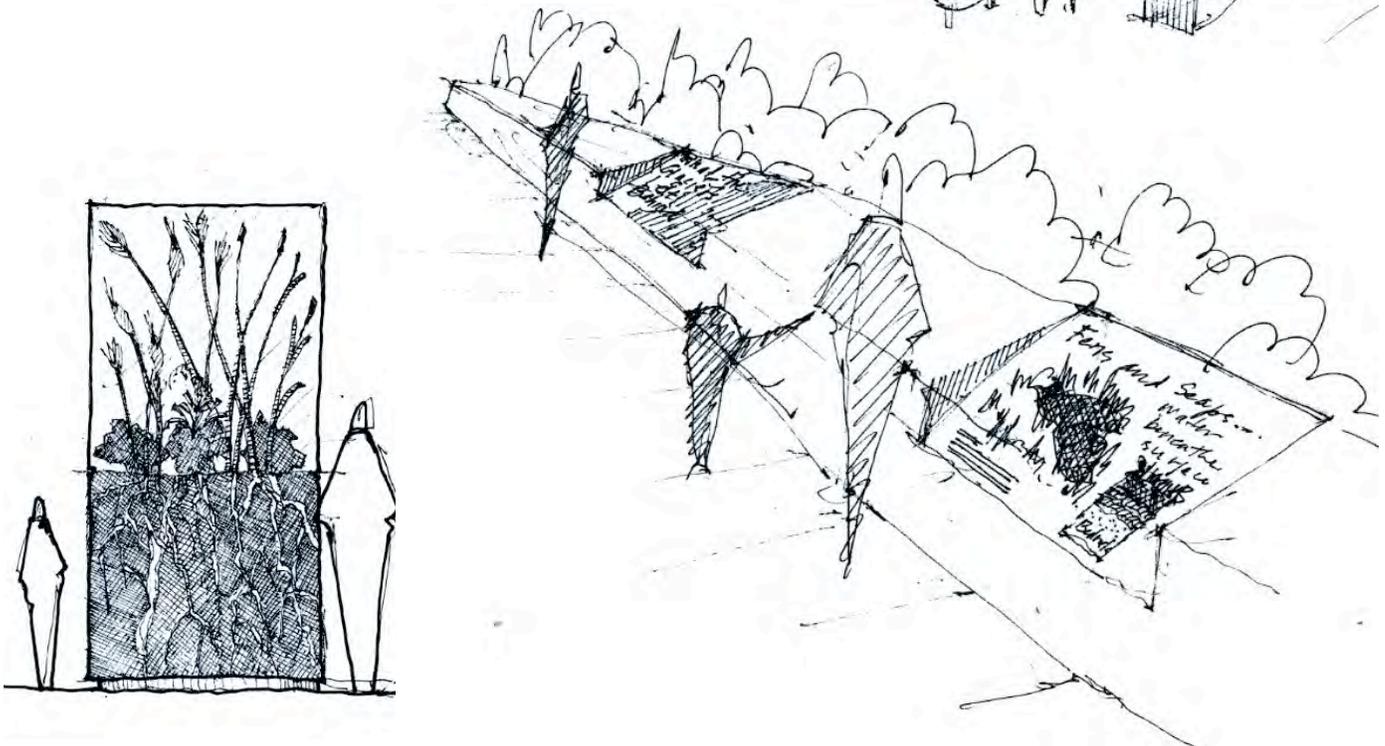
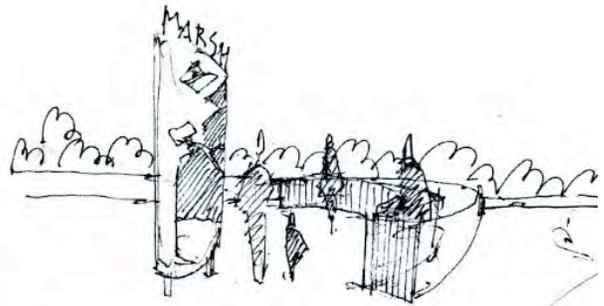
THE FIELD MUSEUM - NATURAL LANDSCAPING

The Field Museum Natural Landscaping Project is an interpretive landscape design for the transformation of The Field Museum's terrace and grounds into a permanent outdoor exhibit. The museum hopes to engage visitors with interpretive displays depicting the change humankind has inflicted on its environment. These displays will provide visitors with a brief history of civilization and instill a renewed appreciation for our natural ecosystems.

This is a textbook example of utilizing the natural landscape to define a "sense of place". The Forest Preserves could act in a similar manner and utilize its landscape to tell a story and engage visitors through interpretation and celebration. The Forest Preserves have a deeply rooted land ethic and appreciation for nature and outdoor immersion. This story could be made easily identifiable by using landscape and restoration to define "sense of place".

Field Museum Design Goals include:

- Improving storm water retention and water quality,
- Eliminating permanent irrigation,
- Creating a native ecosystem,
- Mitigating urban heat island effect,
- Creating educational opportunities, and
- Beautifying the grounds for events.



Images by: Paul Bluestone + Associates

case studies and best practices: site lighting policies

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE-LIGHTSCAPES POLICY

The NPS is highly sensitive to the issues of light and air pollution, especially their effect on “natural lightscapes.” Not only is the protection of this resource critical for nighttime scenery within the National Parks, they are also necessary for maintaining the healthy nocturnal habitat of numerous wildlife and plant species. To help reduce sources of light pollution the NPS has come up with a series of lighting standards to be implemented system wide. The Forest Preserves has adopted similar guidelines and goals in a night sky ordinance adopted in 2012.

NPS standards include:

- Uplighting landscape and architectural features is not acceptable
- Use lighting only when necessary for safety and security
- Specify full-cutoff luminaires to direct light downward
- Minimize the use of incandescent lighting
- Comply with NEMA and UL
- Use low wattage, high output lamps
- Incorporate lighting controls such as timers, photocells and motion detectors
- Color rendering of fluorescent lighting above 80 are not recommended
- Integrate the use of white light sources such as Metal Halide rather than High-Pressure Sodium
- Integrate security lighting with existing architecture
- Reduce connected lighting loads with ambient lighting



The Night Sky - Photograph by Chance Kang

case studies and best practices: formalizing a policy regarding public art

NEA-NPS "IMAGINE YOUR PARKS" FUNDING COLLABORATION

The National Endowment for the Arts' "Art Works" program and the National Park District are collaborating together to "encourage the funding and creation of, and greater public engagement with, art relating to the work and mission of our national park system." The program "Imagine Your Parks Funding Collaboration" is the product of this partnership. There are 14 artistic categories each with specific criteria and objectives. Chosen projects are given a minimum grant of \$10,000 and in rare cases grants of \$100,000 and up are awarded.

Submittal to the funding collaboration is judged by the NEA's "Art Works" program criteria. This criteria has three main goals: art that is shared, art that is transformative and art that is unconventional. Each goal also has four overarching objectives:

- The creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence
- Public engagement with diverse and excellent art
- Lifelong learning in the arts
- The strengthening of communities through art

The "Imagine Your Parks" category is one of nine areas of special interest within the "Art Works" program. This category encourages projects focusing on the following areas of special interest:

- Community engagement & public engagement with diverse and excellent art
- Relationships to memorable places and the landscapes they help protect
- Public engagement in urban environments
- Public engagement with younger generations

The Forest Preserves could identify collaborations with artists, communities and non-profit organizations similar to "Imagine Your Parks". Art installations could vary from permanent and semi-permanent to performance and temporary pieces. These collaborations could engage local populations and could have clear goals and criteria to support the desired visitor experience.



Landscape Art by Sylvain Meyer



Landscape Art by Mehmet Ali Uysal

art within the forest preserves

Public art and integrated design can strengthen the recognition of Forest Preserves' properties by incorporating a variety of approaches to problems and opportunities at selected gateway sites. It will also permit more collaboration with surrounding communities and has the potential for additional funding from other partners. The Forest Preserves' internal policy, external practice and public presence will benefit from more integrated design and public art.

Public art should be commissioned and/or permitted to enhance the interpretation, understanding and stewardship of Forest Preserves' sites and its mission. Public art can generally be considered to take three forms:

- **Permanent markers, monuments or even memorials (20+ years)** are appropriate to provide content and interpretation of natural and social/cultural histories. This can support either the understanding of a particular site's natural presence or to encourage contemplation of human choices that have shaped a particular site.
- **Semi-permanent projects (1-20 years)** allow visitors and nearby residents to have interactions that reflect contemporary understandings of a particular location and allow participating volunteers to share ownership and stewardship because of their efforts to reveal and animate a particular site.
- **Temporary projects (1-365 days)**, installations and performances allow artists and communities to juxtapose ideas at Forest Preserves' sites that will raise visibility and encourage informal and formal discussion of new ideas.

Integrated design practice can strategically and subtly raise the visibility of the Forest Preserves' sites. The impact of integrated designs is enhanced by a long term, strategic commitment to incorporating artists and designers into teams that consider both specific sites and larger Forest Preserves' goals, guidelines and projects. A review of the Forest Preserves' mission with an artist/design team will identify options that the Forest Preserves could consider for gradual implementation at all sites.

Integrated design options might include:

Signify ecological awareness through wind collection



Accessible community gardens



Esoteric locating of specific sites by notations as miniature natural water sheds, height above sea level or direction of true north



Implementation of these options is simultaneously problematic and beneficial. The task of artists and designers is to ensure that the benefits outweigh the problems.

case studies and best practices: a system-wide interpretive master plan

NATIONAL PARKS - COMPREHENSIVE INTERPRETIVE PLANNING

In 1995 the National Park Service adopted a unified system for interpretation and education called Comprehensive Interpretive Plans. This system operates as a guide or manual for the park system to enact new interpretive plans and update existing plans. There are three main sections to the report: the long range interpretive plan, the annual implementation plan and the interpretive database.

The Forest Preserves could adopt a policy similar to the National Park Service in the form of an annual report. This report would act as a working blueprint for visitor experiences within gateway sites. It could include the grand vision as well as tasks, actions, partnerships, costs and time-lines to guide implementation.

Interpretive planning is synonymous with the planning of visitor experience. With this definition, the following questions should be asked: "what are the likely and desired visitor experiences, what will the visitor want to do, feel, learn and experience and what do The Forest Preserves hope they will do, feel and learn?"



National Park Service - Yosemite Interpretive Planning

Some strategies outlined by the NPS include:

- **Flexibility**
"interpretive planning is flexible, interdisciplinary, responsive to client needs and management-oriented rather than development or issue-driven. Planning establishes a foundation for long-term direction-setting, short-term problem solving and annual program analysis."
- **Context**
"the interpretive planning process extends beyond park boundaries. Planning incorporates concessions and cooperating associations as well as local communities, regional partnerships, subject matter experts and subscribes to the principles of sustainability."
- **Research**
"Interpretive planning decisions are based on current research. Decisions regarding personal and non-personal services are rooted in solid subject-matter expertise and reflect knowledge of visitor expectations, demographics, changing social trends and needs."
- **Technique**
"Interpretive planning is based on a thorough understanding of the most current and appropriate interpretive techniques and services and draws upon current research and educational philosophy in program planning."
- **Practicality**
"Interpretive planning includes practical strategies for implementation including funding and management alternatives."

key recommendations: improving sense of place

- **Formalize a policy regarding public art, interpretive installations and performance in the Forest Preserves.** Currently no policy exists addressing the role of art in the Forest Preserves. However, advisors and focus group participants agreed that, in general, natural materials are important but there may be some locations that would benefit from bolder installations which could be effective in drawing people to a destination.
- **Complete a system-wide interpretive master plan.** Currently no plan exists outlining priorities and guidelines for interpretation and communicating our natural and cultural assets within the Forest Preserves. A comprehensive interpretive plan could serve as the backbone of interpretive and program planning and direction. The process will guide staff in determining which stories to tell, how to tell them, and how to reach specific audiences. The resulting system-wide interpretation and education program will thus communicate the Forest Preserves' significance and meanings in the most effective and efficient way.
- **Use restoration work to improve sense of place at gateway sites.** The Forest Preserves has an amazing variety of habitat including prairies, woodlands, savannas, and wetlands and with that comes an impressive diversity of plants and animals. In order for people to continue to enjoy these natural areas, the Forest Preserves must continue to invest in restoration. Showcasing restoration work at gateway sites can demonstrate its importance and build community support. Recruiting new volunteers for already established stewardship sites as well as un-stewarded sites will help connect the larger community to these locations. Providing interpretive signage and programming will also help educate the public about the work of the Forest Preserves and importance of restoration.
- **Develop site specific lighting plans for gateway sites.** Lighting, if used appropriately, can create magical or sublime settings for gathering spaces and address safety concerns. Some elements such as signs, comfort stations, and picnic pavilions may benefit from greater visibility due to lighting. Additionally, with the potential of expanded programming at gateways sites that may extend into evening hours, site lighting may be an effective tool to highlight unique features that exist throughout the Forest Preserves. Lighting at gateways sites should conform with the Forest Preserves' lighting ordinance which is intended to allow visual access to starry night skies.
- **Use infrastructure improvements to improve sense of place at gateway sites.** Opportunities exist to creatively partner with local agencies and municipalities to fund and implement public services and amenities that meet the goals and design guidelines established for gateway sites. Examples such as Pace's new arterial bus rapid transit network, Pulse, and the use of cellphone towers as lookouts or public art should be explored and expanded upon.



The Red Ribbon Park in Qinhuangdao City, China; designed by Turenscape



IMPROVING ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Active living and exposure to nature can improve our overall mental and physical health and well-being, reduce stress levels, maintain healthy bones and strong muscles and lower our risk for chronic conditions like heart disease and depression.

opportunities & challenges

The Forest Preserves offers more than nearly 70,000 acres of natural open space with more than 300 miles of trails, golf courses, aquatic centers and water bodies for canoeing, fishing and kayaking. The Forest Preserves also has six nature centers, five new, revitalized campgrounds with free programming and stewardship sites where volunteers can earn service hours and burn calories. Gateway sites can play a key role in promoting active living and wellness. Challenges to face in terms of access to outdoor recreation opportunities include:

- **Lack of awareness.** Although improvements in outdoor recreation opportunities have been made within the Forest Preserves, more should be done to enhance awareness. Improvements include rehabilitated facilities, expanded trails, new canoe launches and updated campgrounds. However, according to the *Next Century Conservation Plan*, and recommendations and information gathered during our focus group discussions, the public lacks information on and is largely unaware of the options for outdoor recreation and service opportunities and how easily they can be accessed.
- **Need for improved wayfinding.** Through previous planning efforts and the results of our interviews and focus groups, it was often noted that the Forest Preserves' existing wayfinding system can be confusing. This makes accessing and navigating the Forest Preserves and its outdoor recreation amenities difficult for visitors.
- **Need for support from healthcare community.** While the Forest Preserves is already working with the Cook County Department of Public Health and the Alliance for Healthy and Active Communities on grant funded projects like this Gateway Master Plan, other partnerships should be pursued. Opportunities exist to take advantage of work that has already been done by other communities and agencies who have created tools, programs, and policies to improve community health using a holistic approach.
- **Access to health and outdoor-focused amenities, outside of trails, is limited.** The Forest Preserves' has concession rentals for bikes, boating (kayak and canoes included), and cross country skiing. Nature Centers also loan out binoculars for bird watching and snow shoes for hiking in winter. However, other amenities like kayak/canoe launches and winter recreation activities, are more limited.
- **Need to activate sites through programming.** While health focused outdoor recreation programming in the Forest Preserves is only in its infancy, more emphasis should be placed on activating sites for outdoor recreation usage. The Forest Preserves' Wellness in the Woods is a fitness program which utilizes the natural features of the forest preserves for exercise outdoors, but the program is just getting started in 2015, after a pilot in 2014.

case studies and best practices: motivational signage to encourage visitors

KAISER PERMANENTE

Kaiser Permanente's "Thrive" advertising campaign began with the simple objective to position Kaiser Permanente as an organization committed to the total health and wellness of its members, its customers and the communities it serves.

Since its inception in 2004, the campaign has helped establish that message and the brand has been infused into Kaiser Permanente hospitals, medical office buildings and other facilities. The theme of total health and well-being in order to live full happy lives is incorporated into magazine, newspaper and radio ads that focus on everyday things that people can do to improve their health. "Thrive" billboards even remind commuters to eat their fruits and vegetables and when necessary, "chill" as a way to maintain total health.

"Thrive" ads have recently been ranked in the top 10 percent of all health and health insurance advertising in terms of recognition, making the connection between the ad and Kaiser Permanente and likability. Research has also shown that the campaign has significantly changed consumer perceptions, showing an increase in non-members' perceptions of Kaiser Permanente as being serious about pro-actively keeping people healthy and making people feel secure about their health care needs.



Kaiser Permanente's "Thrive" Campaign



key recommendations: improving access to outdoor recreation and volunteer opportunities

- **Distribute and promote new zone, trail and site Centennial maps and consider naming additional trail loops.** To help encourage visitors to get out on the trails, trail signage should define a clear beginning, middle and end to trail systems and should include confirmation of progress and distance.
- **Continue to expand the volunteer program and share the health benefits of participating in restoration work.** Exercise and physical activity can take many forms. The Forest Preserves should advertise opportunities to participate in restoration work as a non-traditional exercise opportunity that can not only help volunteers “get in shape” but can also help to improve the health of local ecological systems.
- **Increase opportunities for equipment rentals at key locations like nature centers and campgrounds and improve signage and wayfinding to rental concessions at gateway sites.** For some visitors, opportunities to participate in physical activities such as biking, kayaking or snowshoeing may be limited because they do not own the right recreational equipment. Increasing the number of rental concessions at gateway sites can improve access to these types of physical activities, encourage visitors to try something new and make it easier for visitors to explore more areas throughout the Forest Preserves. Increasing opportunities for rentals may also increase off season use of some gateway sites.
- **Perform an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) facility assessment for gateway sites.** Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires public accommodations to provide goods and services to people with disabilities on an equal basis with the rest of the general public. While some portions of gateway sites are ADA accessible, other portions are not and there is a lack of information indicating which areas and trails accommodate ADA accessibility. An ADA facilities assessment should be performed at each gateway site.
- **Partner with public transit agencies to enhance access to gateway sites.** Many Forest Preserves’ sites are accessible via public transportation, including CTA bus stops, PACE bus stops and Metra rail stops. Providing safe and intuitive routes from these stops to Forest Preserves’ sites can improve access to the many outdoor recreation opportunities that the Forest Preserves provide. Partnerships with these and other public transit agencies should be explored in order to increase communication to public transit riders that the Forest Preserves are a valuable resource that is accessible to them.
- **Develop motivational signage to encourage visitors to participate in physical activities at gateway sites.** The Forest Preserves are a popular destination for a variety of reason. Not only are some visitors unaware of the recreational opportunities available to them, but they may also be unaware of the health benefits associated with those opportunities. Motivational signage can be developed and implemented at a variety of scales both to encourage visitors to partake in physical activities and to inform them of the health benefits that they would receive from each activity.
- **Educate the public about the important health benefits of nature.**
- **Establish partnerships with health organizations and other community organizations, programs and clubs.** Public health leaders have recently been examining the impact of the built environment on communities. The Forest Preserves should develop an outreach plan for each gateway site to identify potential partner organizations.



PROMOTION OF GATEWAY SITES

In addition to physical improvements at or near gateway sites themselves, new opportunities exist for promotion of gateway sites as destinations within Cook County.

opportunities & challenges

- **Limited partnerships with neighboring community and municipal agencies.** While partnerships between the Forest Preserves and local community organizations and municipalities has improved significantly, a focus on neighboring communities, specifically around gateways, should be a priority. During the focus groups, local communities, individuals and organizations expressed an interest in increased partnerships with the Forest Preserves. Pursuing these partnership opportunities will help establish a unique identity for each gateway and sense of community ownership.
- **Utilization of existing technology.** The use of technology is widespread and easily accessible. For example, outdoor enthusiasts already identify with and utilize many existing applications to support their activities. Consequently, although the Forest Preserves is working to make their website and online maps more user and mobile friendly they should also consider partnering with existing applications.
- **Brand consistency and cohesion.** Through the *Centennial Campaign Plan* a re-branding effort provided the Forest Preserves with an updated look and strategy to help build brand awareness. The challenge is blending elements of old signage and logos with newer designs and creating an approach to unify and maintain consistency throughout the entire system.
- **Limited marketing capacity.** While both the *Centennial Campaign Plan* and *Next Century Conservation Plan* call for a comprehensive and far reaching marketing campaign to promote the Forest Preserves to the residents of Cook County, resources and staff capacity is often limited. Direct marketing through advertisements like billboards, radio and television ads and other lower-cost marketing strategies should be considered for promoting the gateways and other Forest Preserves' sites.

case studies and best practices: off-site locations to host visitor information

REI - FLAGSHIP STORE DISPLAY PARTNERSHIP

REI designs flagship stores to be immersive experiences that seek to inspire, educate and outfit people with outdoor interests no matter their skill level. The stores are intended to act as a meeting place for community members to think expansively about, “products, educational programming, services, community engagement and sustainability.”

Flagship stores usually have unique partnerships with one or several outdoor recreation areas in the regions they serve, such as “The Ranger Station” which provides information through a dynamic partnership with the National Park Service, the Forest Service, REI and Washington State Parks. These partnerships help the growing outdoor community understand what natural amenities exist around them.

Other programs include:

- Rentals,
- Promotion of outdoor resources,
- Free and low cost classes in an “Outdoor School”,
- Field programs in the regions wild areas, and
- Day outings including: cycling, paddling, fitness, hiking, camping, climbing, snow sports, photography and wilderness medicine

This type of private/public cooperation and engagement could act as a model for the Forest Preserves. These partnerships not only enhance awareness for local outdoor amenities but can also increase use and exposure to nature and outdoor recreation.



REI outdoor class - Photo by Gary A. Young



REI Ranger Station in REI store - Photo by Unknown

case studies and best practices: docent or volunteer program

CHICAGO GREETER PROGRAM

The Chicago Greeter program hosted over 10,000 visitors from every state and over 90 countries in 2013 alone. The program is administered and funded by *Choose Chicago*, the official tourism organization of the City of Chicago. Currently the Greeters offer two free options to tourists.

- **Greeter Visits**
Tourists must register at least 10 business days in advance for a 2-4 hour guided tour of Chicago. The tours can accommodate up to six guests and are uniquely built around a guests language, personal interests and desired neighborhood. If guests are unsure what to see, Greeters are happy to choose for them. All Greeter Visits utilize walking and public transportation.
- **Insta-Greeter Visits**
Tourists can drop in at the last minute for a one-hour guided walk of The Loop, Uptown neighborhood or Millennium Park. Services vary depending on location.

The Forest Preserves could consider a similar volunteer model to provide visitors with personalized walks within one of Cook County's premier outdoor amenities. Chicago Greeter is part of the Global Greeter Network, a large network of greeter programs around the world. What makes Chicago Greeter visits different than traditional docent led tours is there is no script, Greeters are just friendly locals showing off their City in a casual and fun way.

The Chicago Greeters currently have over 200 certified volunteers fluent in over 12 languages. Certified Greeters undergo an interview process and training, complete orientation and shadow veteran Greeters on visits. They also must commit to providing at least 12 visits per year.

The Chicago Greeter Program has seven goals:

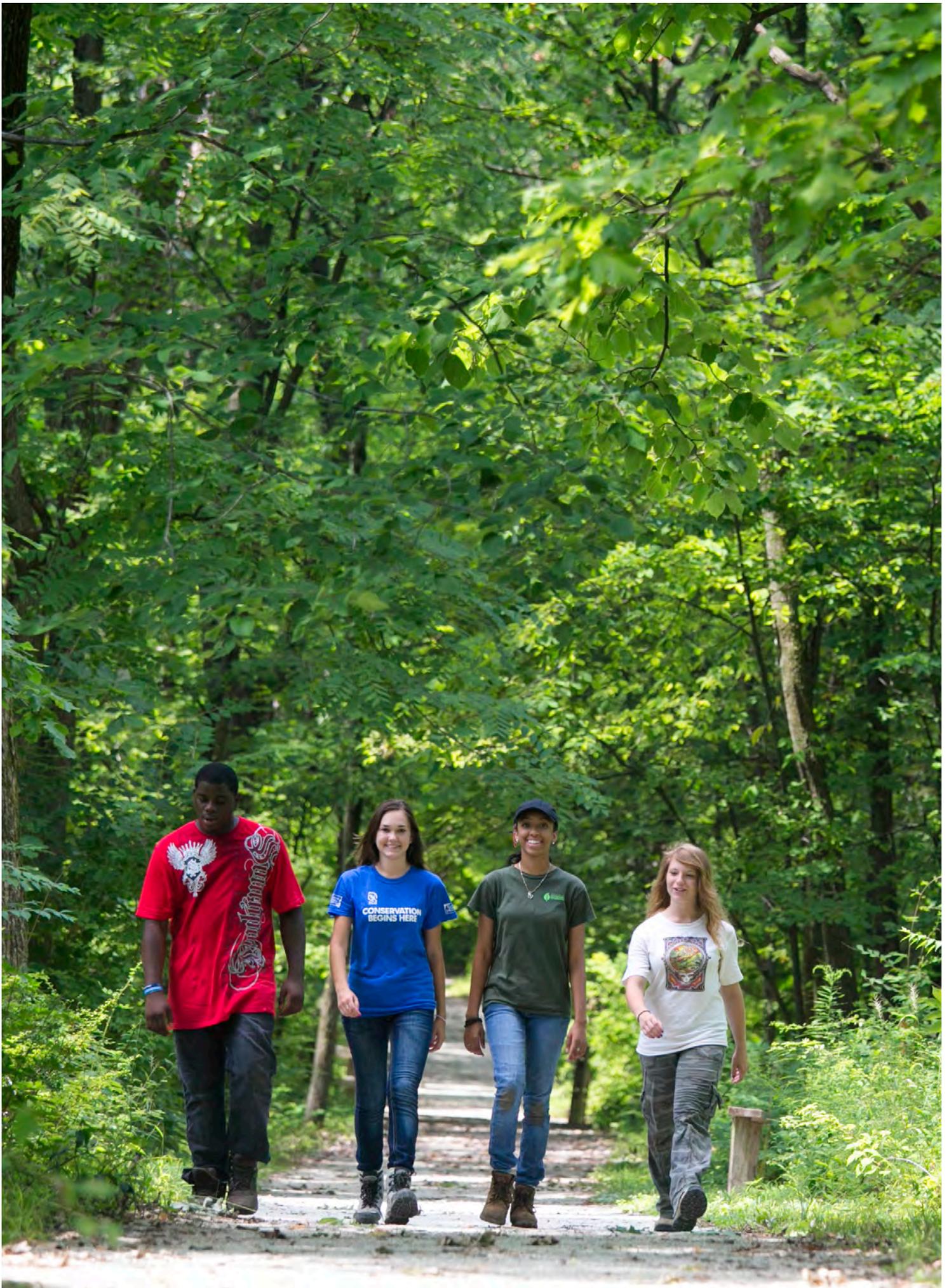
- Showcase the city to visitors;
- Make the big city feel welcome to visitors;
- Educate visitors about Chicago's public transportation system;
- Make it easier for visitors to discover Chicago's neighborhoods;
- Give a sense for the character of Chicagoans and how they live and play;
- Connect visitors with a friend in the city; and
- Provide a locals perspective.



Chicago Greeter Program - Photo credit: Katie Law

key recommendations: promoting gateway sites

- **Determine role of gateway sites in the Forest Preserves' marketing and communications efforts.** Prioritizing gateway sites in Forest Preserve marketing and communications efforts would give more direction and encouragement to first time visitors who are unsure of what the Forest Preserves have to offer and "where to start." Specialty signage could also be a part of the strategy. A changeable sign at designated site entry points could be an effective way to advertise and promote events.
- **Consider off-site locations to host visitor information.** Providing Forest Preserves' information at off-site locations (e.g. at retail outlets, public buildings like libraries or at train stations) where potential visitors are seeking information related to certain recreational activities may provide the opportunity to reach new audiences who are unfamiliar with the Forest Preserves.
- **Expand the use of emerging technologies to help build awareness.** A new mobile-friendly version of the Forest Preserves' website and online mapping system that will allow visitors to more easily access information about the Forest Preserves on their computer, tablet or mobile device is currently being developed. These tools will help visitors navigate once they arrive at a Forest Preserve site. Opportunities should also be explored to take advantage of mobile applications that already exist. Forest Preserves' information could be shared and integrated into popular trail and running applications such as AllTrails or Every Trail. This integration could reach a new audience of application users who are unfamiliar with the Forest Preserves' trail system.
- **Develop a gateway site staff training and related tool kit.** The presence of well-informed staff and vendors can address many of the challenges facing Forest Preserves' sites, such as wayfinding. While some gateway sites already include a facility that is staffed, such as a nature center or aquatic center, others do not. A strategy should be developed for a training with a related tool kit for staff and vendors at gateway sites.
- **Develop a gateway site docent or ambassador program.** A docent is a person who serves as a guide or educator on a voluntary basis. While existing volunteer programs focus on restoration work, expanded volunteer programming could focus on education and communication. A volunteer docent or ambassador program could be implemented to provide volunteer opportunities for those who desire to educate and guide visitors, sharing information about nearby forest preserves and amenities to help navigate gateways sites.
- **Identify the role of partners at gateway sites.** The opportunity for partnerships between the Forest Preserves and other agencies, volunteer groups, private businesses and residential groups is extensive. Clearly identifying the desired partnerships and the role of those partners such as capital development, program development or site stewardship is an important step to take in order to ensure effective and long lasting partnerships.
- **Consider sponsorships for certain gateway site amenities or special events.** Sponsorship of amenities like pavilions or even interpretive installations may be an effective tool for raising capital for implementation and even maintenance of amenities at gateway sites. Special events at gateways sites could also generate revenue for amenities and programs.





NEXT STEPS

The next step in implementing this Gateway Master Plan is the development of more detailed design guidelines and specific plans for each site.

Conceptual and schematic plans will be developed in 2016 for eleven priority gateway sites and design guidelines for common prototypical elements of the Gateway Master Plan. These elements include but are not limited to:

- Entrance signs
- Wayfinding / welcoming / motivational signs and features
- Site furnishings
- Landscape
- Lighting

The consultant team will also prepare a draft Gateway Design Guideline compendium illustrating and outlining specifications for standard prototypical gateway elements. Final construction drawings and specifications for five priority gateway sites will also be prepared as part of this planning process. These next steps will be made possible, in part, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Healthy HotSpot Initiative led by the Cook County Department of Public Health.



acknowledgments

This plan was developed with the input and advice from dozens of smart, thoughtful and committed people. A special thanks to all those who helped this plan become a reality.

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FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

GATEWAY MASTER PLAN APPENDIX



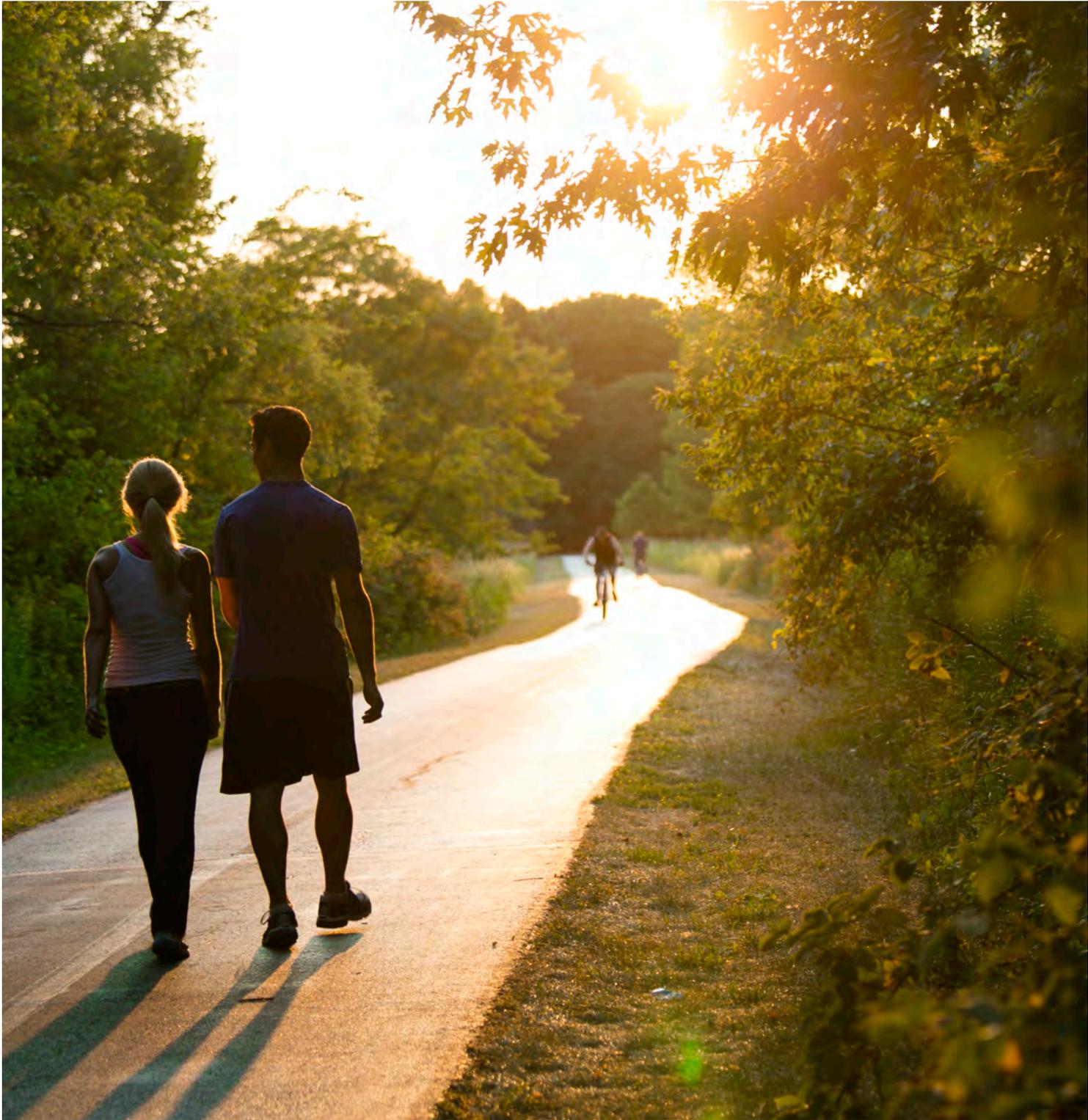


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SITE PRIORITIZATION & FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

The *Gateway Master Plan* had both an internal and external advisory committee to guide the process for prioritizing the gateway sites from 31 sites down to 11 priority sites (10 suburban and 1 city location, Dan Ryan Woods). Because the primary grant funding for planning was limited to suburban Cook County, only one City of Chicago site, Dan Ryan Woods, made the initial priority list. A separate grant from the Forest Preserve Foundation awarded late in 2015 provided funding for additional planning at Dan Ryan Woods and two other City of Chicago sites (Caldwell Woods and Eggers Grove). Gateway sites were selected as priority sites for additional planning and design based upon input from staff, both of the advisory committees and consultant recommendations. In general, priority was given to two types of gateway sites: 'campus sites' with multiple destinations and activities and 'corridor sites' that serve as a trailhead or a gateway to a regional trail.

The 12 priority sites include:

1. Deer Grove/Camp Reinberg (Northwest)
2. Busse Woods (Northwest)
3. Bunker Hill/Caldwell Woods (North/City of Chicago)
4. Skokie Lagoons (North)
5. Bemis Woods (Central)
6. Thatcher Woods/Trailside Nature Center (Central)
7. Sand Ridge Nature Center/Camp Shabbona (South)
8. Sauk Trail Woods (South)
9. Dan Ryan Woods (South/City of Chicago)
10. Eggers Grove (South/City of Chicago)
11. Oak Forest Heritage Preserve (Southwest)
12. Palos/Pulaski Complex/Camp Bullfrog (Southwest)

Focus group meetings were held in September at each priority site (except Eggers Grove, which was added as a priority site later in the year). Cook County Board members, elected officials from nearby municipalities, park districts and chambers of commerce, site stewards, representatives of user groups, residents, advisory committee members, select forest preserve staff and other stakeholders were invited to participate in a 90-minute session to review ideas and opportunities for the site. Image boards were prepared for each session that showed an aerial view of the site and specific opportunity areas with sample ideas for signage, site furniture and other opportunities for highlighting the area. Attendees were asked for their opinions on which entrance or entrances they consider the main "front door" for welcoming and orienting visitors, as well as their opinions on signage and wayfinding needs, enhancing the sense of place and providing other visitor amenities.

FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS & ATTENDEES

Sauk Trail Woods: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 8:30 AM at Picnic Shelter #5

Attendees:

- Hildy Kingma - Village of Park Forest Economic Development & Planning (Director)
- Rob Gunther - Village of Park Forest Recreation & Parks (Director)
- Frank Perez - Chicago Heights Park District
- Georgette Gladstone - Park Forest R&P Advisory Board
- Sarah Coulter - Village of Park Forest
- Lynn Kurczewski - Will County Forest Preserve Planning & Development

Bemis Woods: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 4:00 PM at Picnic Shelter #6

Attendees:

- Ken Grunke - West Suburban Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Matt Supert - Director of Municipal Services - Western Springs
- Aleks Zabridis - Community Park District of La Grange Park (Director)
- Joe Swano - FPCC Staff

Thatcher/Trailside: Thursday August 20, 2015 8:30 AM at Thatcher Pavilion

Attendees:

- John Elliott - Former FPCC Employee
- Eric Palm - Village of River Forest (Administrator)
- Victor Guarino - Site steward
- Jean Guarino - Site steward
- Jean Sheerin - FPCC Staff
- Sally Stoval - Resident/Green Community Connections
- Kathy Keane - Resident
- Ron Sherman - Resident/River Forest CERT Director & Zoo Docent
- Katarina Berin - Resident
- Kirsten Peachy - Resident
- Shelley Davis - Forest Preserve Foundation
- Radhika Miraylia - Forest Preserve Foundation
- Kathy Wurster - FPCC Staff
- Irene Flebbe - FPCC Staff

Sand Ridge/Shabbona: Thursday, August 20, 2015 4:00 PM at Sand Ridge Nature Center

Attendees:

- Charles Dockery - Calumet Memorial Park District (Director)
- John Watson - Village of South Holland Economic Development (Director)
- Nancy Joseph - Resident
- Suellen Burns - Millennium Reserve (Senior Advisor)
- Michael Bergin - Boy Scouts of America
- Guy Booker - Team Leader Camp Shabbona
- Tim Mondl - FPCC Staff
- Jim Carpenter - FPCC Staff

Oak Forest Preserve: Wednesday, August 26, 2015 8:30 AM at Oak Forest Hospital**Attendees:**

- Adam Dotson - City of Oak Forest Community Development (Director)
- Cynthia Grannan - Oak Forest Park District (Director)
- Gina Massuda-Barnett - CCDPH Oak Forest Health Center
- Dennis Mitzner - Resident
- Chrissy Maher - Chicago Southland CVB

Skokie Lagoons: Thursday, August 27, 2015 8:30 AM at Forest Way Picnic Shelter #1**Attendees:**

- Larry Suffredin - Cook County Commissioner 13th District
- John Swierk - Village of Winnetka Design Review Commission
- Robert Smith - Winnetka Park District (Executive Director)
- Margaret Frisbie - Friends of the Chicago River (Executive Director)
- Nathan Parch - Village of Glencoe Historic Preservation Commission (Chair)
- Lisa Sheppard - Glencoe Park District (Executive Director)
- David Kosnik - Site Steward
- Terry Dason - Winnetka-Northfield Chamber of Commerce (Director)
- Charlie Shabica - Resident
- Ryan Chew - FPCC Boat Concessionaire
- Laurie Morse - Resident
- Matt Havlik - Village of Winnetka
- Bill Byron - Northfield Parks & Rec
- Jena Johnson - Forest Preserve Foundation
- Gary Morrissey - Assistant Site Steward
- Sigrid Pilgrim - Illinois Paddling Council
- Kathy Wurster - FPCC Staff

Palos/Pulaski Complex: Thursday, August 27, 2015 4:00 PM at Maple Lake Boat House**Attendees:**

- Jerry Stoeckigt - CAMBr (Executive Director)
- LeeAnn Fisk - Village of Palos Park Recreation Department (Director)

- Sue Collins - Palos Equestrian
- Jan Pietrzak - Site steward
- Rick Boehm - Village of Palos Park
- Joe Kaech - REI
- Diana Krug - Site steward/FPCC Staff
- Raquel Garcia Alvarez - FPCC Staff

Bunker Hill: Friday, August 28, 2015 8:30 AM at Bunker Hill Picnic Shelter #1**Attendees:**

- John Balaban - Site steward
- Ross Klicker - Village of Niles
- Bruce Sylvester - Village of Niles
- Joe Swano - FPCC Staff
- Pam Sielski - FPCC Staff
- Tim Mondl - FPCC Staff

Busse Woods/Ned Brown: Wednesday, September 2, 2015 8:30 AM at Picnic Shelter #4**Attendees:**

- Ron Raphael - Village of Elk Grove Village
- Mike Krol - Village of Elk Grove Village
- Kaili Harding - Schaumburg Business Association
- Matt Frank - Village of Schaumburg Business Development Commission
- Liam Durnan - Chicago River Canoe & Kayak
- Kris DaPra - FPCC Staff
- John McCabe - FPCC Staff
- Kathy Wurster - FPCC Staff

Dan Ryan Woods: Thursday, September 3, 2015 8:30 AM at Dan Ryan Pavilion**Attendees:**

- Laura Milkert - Mighty Acorns/Field Museum
- Michael Alving - Resident
- Jennifer Alving - Resident
- Larry Unruh - Site Steward
- Collins Fitzpatrick - Resident
- Richard Jeszke - Resident
- Jean Sheerin - FPCC Staff
- Chris Slattery - FPCC Staff

Deer Grove: Thursday, September 3, 2015 4:00 PM at Camp Reinberg Dining Hall**Attendees:**

- Ron Vargason - Site Steward
- Cathy Brady - Site Steward
- Ed Tynczuk - Palatine Park District
- Cheryl Tynczuk - Palatine Park District
- Raquel Garcia Alvarez - FPCC Staff

Project staff and consultants were also present at all focus group sessions. Ideas and suggestions raised at focus group sessions will be further refined by the consultant team. Preliminary concept plans are expected to be released in February 2016.

NED BROWN WOODS/ BUSSE FOREST

Ned Brown Woods / Busse Forest is a 3,558-acre preserve located along both sides of Higgins Road, south of Arlington Heights. Ned Brown Woods / Busse Forest is an extremely popular site, with a reputation as the busiest preserve in the system and one of the best-used natural areas in the State of Illinois, with over 2.5 million visitors per year.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Busse Forest is named after William Busse, a member of the Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners when the Forest Preserves was organized in 1916, and a Cook County Commissioner beginning in 1900. The Busse family was an early settler of the Elk Grove region. The site was dedicated as a nature preserve in 1964, and is now a part of the Ned Brown Preserve. This site is a dedicated National Natural Landmark, as it is one of the most diverse natural areas within Cook County.

RECREATION AMENITIES

The 457-acre Busse Reservoir, south of Higgins Road, is one of the largest fishing and boating waters in Cook County and can be fished year-round. The chain of several connected pools, better known as Busse Lake, was created in 1978 when natural waterways were dammed and the area was excavated. Busse Lake is stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, northern pike, brown bullhead, channel catfish and walleye. The lake is open to canoes, kayaks, rowboats, small fishing boats and sailboats. A boat ramp on the west side of Main Lake allows boaters to load their own crafts, something unique to the preserves. In the summer, visitors can rent canoes and rowboats by the hour, pull away from shore and explore the lake's islands and coves.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

Flatwoods, slightly depressed areas with poorly draining soils, are a unique feature of this region. They support red maple, swamp white oak and black ash trees. The upland forest is an ancient remnant, full of tall red oaks and hickories, maple, ash, basswood, elm and very large ironwoods. Wildflowers such as bloodroot, great white trillium and woodland phlox can be found here and the site is popular with migratory birds, as well as herons, terns and egrets. Busse's marshes support shorebirds, mink and muskrat.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Busse Woods is accessed from Arlington Heights Road, Higgins Road, Biesterfield Road or Landmeier Road
- **Regional Access:** Busse Woods is regionally accessible by either I-90 (Northwest Tollway) or I-290
- **Public Transportation:** Access is provided by PACE, which offers services on routes passing along the east and west sides of the preserve. From the west side, access is provided by the Northwest Transportation Center in Schaumburg which has connections to the Rosemont CTA Blue Line station, via PACE routes 600 and 606. There is a 0.7 mile walk via Martingale Road and Higgins Road to the main entrance which is east of I-290. From the east side, access is provided by PACE bus route 616 which connects to Metra at Itasca. From the bus stop at the intersection of Arlington Heights Road and Higgins Road, there is 0.02 mile walk to the eastern entrance on Higgins Road.
- **Trail Access:** Internal 8-mile loop trail

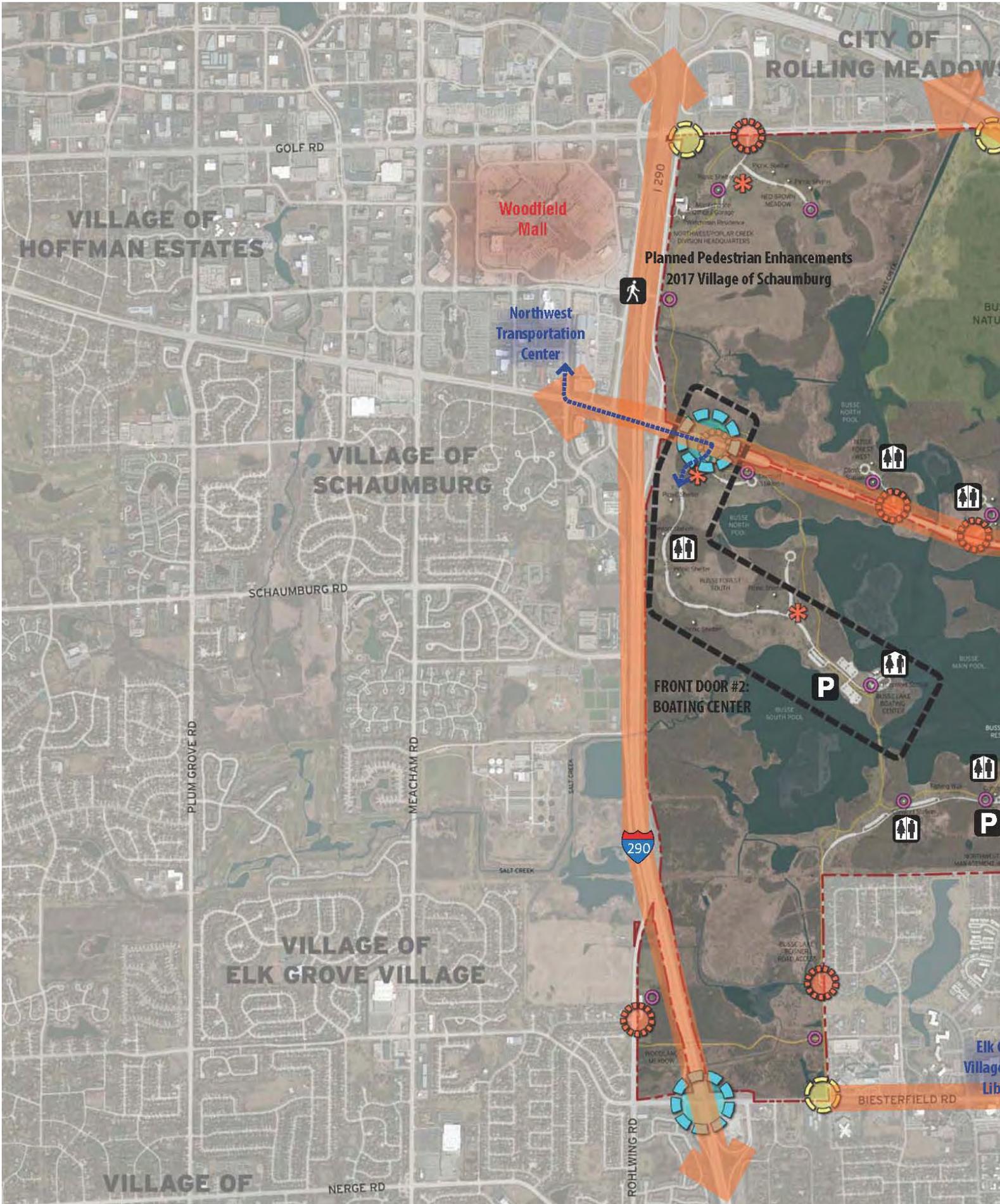
INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing wayfinding signage:** Wayfinding signage exists but is not easily distinguishable by vehicle. Additionally, grove numbers are out of order which causes confusion.
- **Restrooms:** Existing brick comfort stations exist at most picnic groves.
- **Parking:** Parking is ample but can be difficult to access during the summer due to an increased volume of visitors.
- **Concessions:** Concessions at the boat house include motorized and non-motorized rentals and a bait shop. Access however is difficult due to a lack of wayfinding and promotion for the facility.
- **Utility Access:** Unknown. However it was noted that no potable water exists at the new boat house.

sense of place: ned brown woods / busse forest

restoration ecology rich premier
fishing trails COMMUNITY 3,700 meadow partnerships
dynamic nature acres water tourism
boats preserve PICNIC bikes volunteering
reservoir parties kayaks & canoes GROVES NATIONAL
flying weekend fun running & walking NATURAL
field ONE STOP bridges LANDMARK
undiscovered SHOP elk pasture busy





CITY OF ROLLING MEADOWS

VILLAGE OF HOFFMAN ESTATES

GOLF RD

Woodfield Mall

Planned Pedestrian Enhancements
2017 Village of Schaumburg



Northwest
Transportation
Center

VILLAGE OF
SCHAUMBURG

SCHAUMBURG RD

FRONT DOOR #2:
BOATING CENTER



PLUM GROVE RD

MEACHAM RD

VILLAGE OF
ELK GROVE VILLAGE



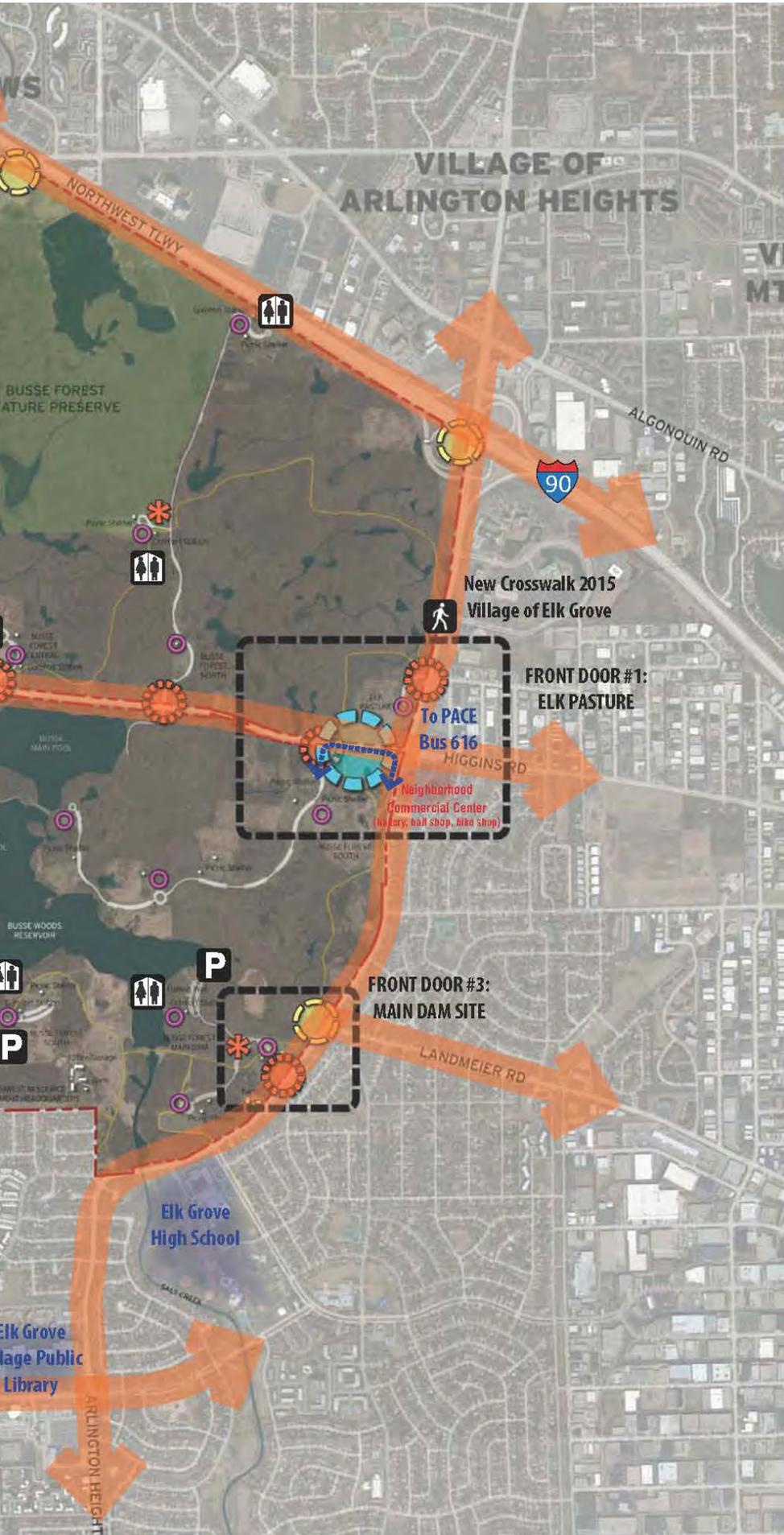
BIESTERFIELD RD

VILLAGE OF

NERGE RD

ROHLWING RD

Elk
Village
Lib



LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives referenced three potential front door opportunity sites.

- Elk Pasture:** The elk pasture was considered due to its popularity, accessibility and high visibility.
- Boating Center:** The boathouse is one of the Forest Preserves' premier rental facilities. However, it is relatively unknown even throughout adjacent communities. Focus group members had a special interest in developing a gateway site at the entrance drive to the boathouse off of Higgins Road. This area is more visible than the boathouse itself and would provide users interested in the boathouse a starting point with proper wayfinding.
- Main Dam Site:** This location was noted as being especially popular with local users. It is well used by fisherman, has access to the Salt Creek Trail, ample open space for capital improvements, and existing parking and bathrooms.

DEER GROVE / CAMP REINBERG

Situated in northwestern Cook County, Deer Grove was the first preserve acquired by the Forest Preserve District, beginning with 500 acres in 1916. With its long, rich history and extensive trails, the 1,800-acre Deer Grove has attracted generations of visitors, from serious botanists to weekend joggers.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Deer Grove, Forest Preserve Number One, was formally dedicated on Saturday, June 16, 1917, under the auspices of the Board and the County Superintendent of Schools, at a Country Life Festival in which the children of public schools and the citizens of Palatine, Elk Grove, Barrington, Wheeling, and other townships participated. On September 2, 1919, the board adopted a resolution naming the preserve Deer Grove. Camp Reinberg was originally named for Peter Reinberg, elected president of the Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners when it first met and organized on February 11, 1915. When acquired, the Deer Grove property contained several buildings, which became the inspiration and nucleus of Camp Reinberg. In his annual message in 1918, president Reinberg reported that during July and August 1917, 600 children of poor parents, and their mothers, were given ten day outings at Deer Grove Park. Within a few years the Forest Preserves had constructed two dormitories, a large mess hall and kitchen, bath houses, toilets, and several small buildings, all east of Quinten Road to create what is now Camp Reinberg. In the late 1930s two groups of cabins were added by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

RECREATION AMENITIES

Miles of trails make it easy for outdoor enthusiasts to access the preserves' diverse habitats. Runners, cross-country skiers and cyclists can cruise the four miles of paved trail, while ten miles of unpaved trails appeal to hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. This vast, looping trail system is heavily used year round. Deer Grove is also home to a sledding hill, located near the main Deer Grove parking lots. Also near these lots is the five-acre Deer Grove Lake.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

Deer Grove includes a great variety of habitat including some of which are protected within a state-designated nature preserve. The wetlands that dot the preserve provide shelter to turtles, frogs and salamanders. Springtime is an ideal time to see woodland wildflowers such as Dutchman's breeches and to see and hear migrating songbirds. Hummingbirds can be spotted feeding on one of their favorite plants - jewelweed, which grows along the ravines and beneath the trees.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Deer Grove is accessed from Lake Cook Road, Dundee Road or Quentin Road
- **Regional Access:** Deer Grove is regionally accessed by either I-290 to IL-53 or I-90 to IL-53. Northwest Highway also provides regional access
- **Public Transportation:** None
- **Trail Access:** Palatine Trail access and an internal 4-mile trail system

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing wayfinding signage:** Existing wayfinding directs visitors off Dundee Road and Lake Cook Road to Quentin Road and the Camp Reinberg entrance
- **Restrooms:** Comfort stations are evenly dispersed from East to West throughout the preserve
- **Parking:** Parking is ample and accessible
- **Concessions:** Camping at Camp Reinberg
- **Utility Access:** Unknown.
- **Other:** Deer Grove is home to a sledding hill, Deer Grove Lake, flying field, and Camp Reinberg. An Openlands Pilot Project is also currently underway.

sense of place: deer grove / camp reinberg

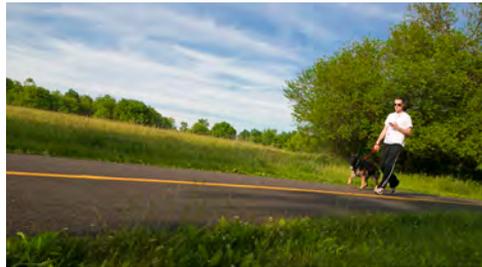
rolling hills
woodland and wetland
CAMPING
diversity
bird watching

trails
FIRST ACQUISITION SITE
cross-country skiing
historic gateway

variety
first 500 acres 1916
prairie
ravines
volunteers

restoration work
openlands interpretive signage
sledding hill

topography
restoration work





LEGEND	PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)	
	Identity Messaging Opportunity	<p>During focus group discussions, representatives referenced three potential front door opportunity sites.</p>
	Orientation Messaging Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic Gateway: A historic gateway element consisting of stone piers and walls is located at the northwest corner of Dundee and Quentin Roads. This corner has high visibility and also was the historic entrance to the Forest Preserves' first acquisition.
	Arrival Messaging Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deer Grove East: High visibility and use of the Deer Grove East entrance along Dundee Road provides a "front door" atmosphere. Opportunities may also exist to incorporate the Openlands installations into gateway site designs. Picnic shelters and comfort stations are also plentiful in this area.
	Orientation Messaging Opportunity	
	Site Specific Messaging Opportunity	

SKOKIE LAGOONS

The Skokie Lagoons Forest Preserves, also known as the William N. Erickson Preserves, cover 894 acres and contains 7.5 miles of trail which surround a network of pools, channels and islands that wind between Winnetka, Northfield and Glencoe. The Skokie Lagoons are a prime destination for water exploration in northern Cook County.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Originally one of the region's largest and richest marshes, much of the area was drained by settlers for agriculture. In the 1930's the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) dug out the current lagoon system, in part to address flooding and increase recreational use. The massive effort was the largest CCC project in the nation.

RECREATION AMENITIES

With public boat access (boasting some of Cook County's best fishing), biking and hiking trails and picnic areas, this well-loved, wooded preserve offers peaceful retreats and activities around every bend.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

American Indians knew this area as the "great marsh" and it was known for its wildlife habitat. The Skokie Lagoons provide critical habitat for migrating ducks, herons, cormorants, and a great variety of fishes including bluegill, sunfish and largemouth bass. Even mink have been seen swimming in the lagoons.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** The Skokie Lagoons are accessed by Tower and Willow Roads as well as Forest Way which connects the two
- **Regional Access:** The Skokie Lagoons are regionally accessible by the I-94 Edens Expressway
- **Public Transportation:** There are two main points of entry to this preserve. The Willow Road entrance is accessible via Metra at Winnetka, and a connection to Pace route 423, with a stop at Willow Road and Forest Way. The Tower Road entrance is accessible via Metra at Hubbard Woods Metra Station, and a 1.2 mile walk west along Gage Street and Tower Road.
- **Trail Access:** Green Bay Trail and North Branch Trail access and an internal 7.5 mile trail system

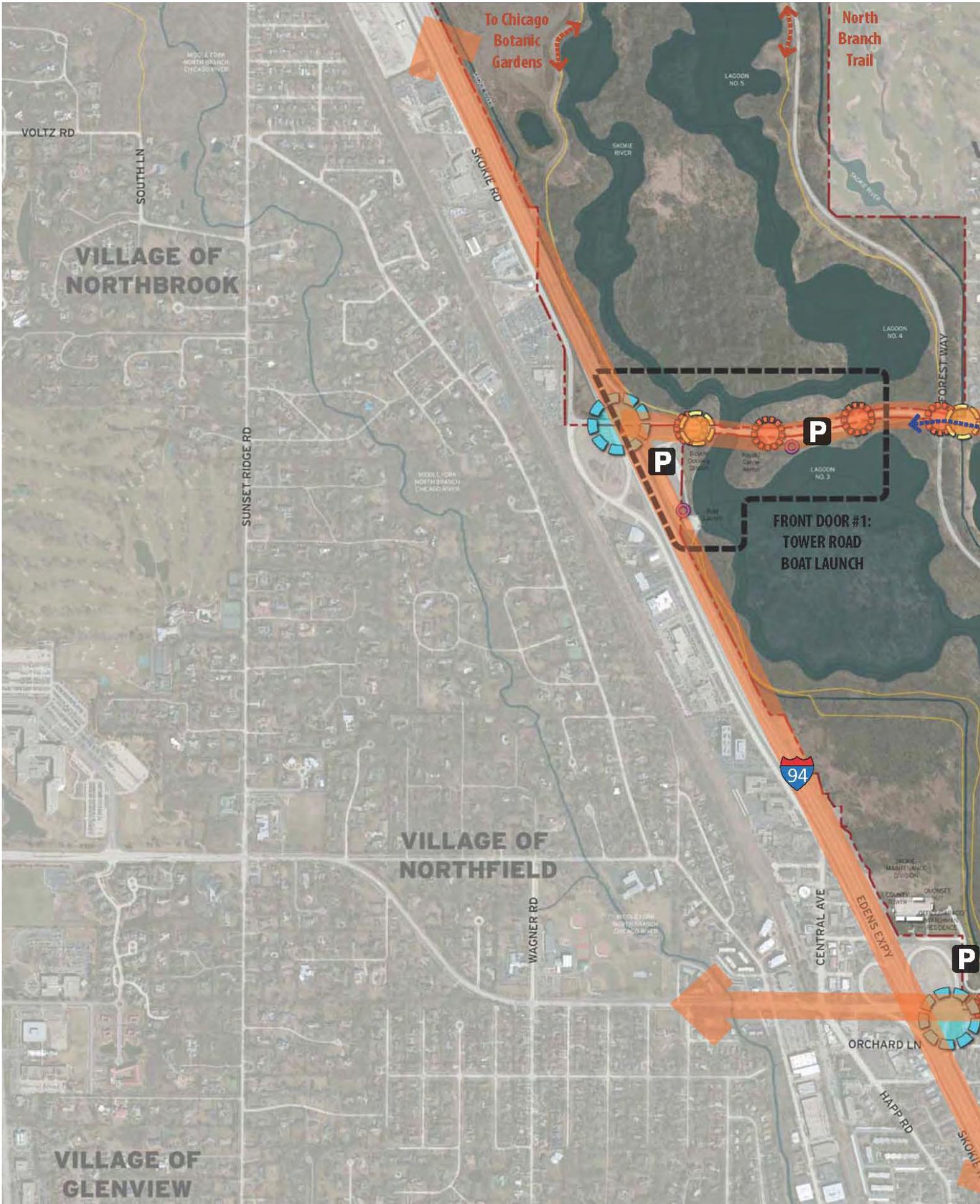
INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing wayfinding signage:** None
- **Restrooms:** None
- **Parking:** Ample parking exists at the boat launch. Many visitors park in gravel along the shoulder of Forest Way.
- **Concessions:** Non-motorized boat rentals
- **Utility Access:** Unknown
- **Other:** Connections to The Chicago Botanic Garden

sense of place: skokie lagoons

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
 un-programmed **chicago** **OUTDOOR** **water** leave no
 KAYAKS **botanic** **CLASSROOM** "great" **child** RECREATION
canoes garden "BigWet" **marsh"** inside
 HERON ROOKERY do no harm **serene** **PEACEFUL**
 access **fishing** **paddling** **Prairie"** LAGOONS regional connections
biology largest CCC **birding** **forest** blissful
fitness (civilian conservation corps) **restoration** **FAMILIES**
 BOATING **project in the nation** **dam** **trails**
diversity flood prevention **residential** **REFUGE**
 VOLUNTEERING





VOLTZ RD

SOUTH LN

VILLAGE OF
NORTHBROOK

SUNSET RIDGE RD

VILLAGE OF
NORTHFIELD

WAGNER RD

VILLAGE OF
GLENVIEW

SKOKIE RD

To Chicago
Botanic
Gardens

North
Branch
Trail

P

P

FRONT DOOR #1:
TOWER ROAD
BOAT LAUNCH

94

CENTRAL AVE

ORCHARD LN

P

HAPP RD

SKOKIE RD

LAGOON NO. 5

SKOKIE RIVER

LAGOON NO. 4

LAGOON NO. 3

FOREST WAY

SKOKIE MAINTENANCE DIVISION

COUNTRY CENTER

CHICKEN HUT

WILSON RESIDENCE



LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives referenced three potential front door opportunity sites.

- Tower Road Boat Launch:** This is a well known, heavily used location. It has adequate parking and a non-motorized boat rental facility as well as a new warming/changing house for paddlers.
- Grove #1:** This is a central location with high visibility off Forest Way. Improvements here could alleviate overcrowding at the boat launch and rental facility site. Additionally, there was a high interest in adding boat launches at this location as well as formalizing vehicular and bike parking along Forest Way.
- Dam site:** This is a well known, highly visible feature within the lagoon system. An additional boat launch on the south side of the dam would eliminate the need for one of the sites most dangerous portages and give access to the entire lagoon system. Participants expressed an interest in improving and expanding bike and vehicular parking, providing enhanced boat storage and developing new educational facilities. This location also provides excellent bird habitat.

BUNKER HILL

Largely within Chicago city limits, the 340-acre Clayton F. Smith Preserves, often simply called “Bunker Hill,” are truly an urban oasis. With several large and distinct picnic groves, remarkable natural areas, indoor bathrooms and easy parking, Clayton Smith provides easy access for those seeking exercise, natural play areas for kids and rich plant and animal communities.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Originally a privately owned Gold Course named “Bunker Hill”, this site is now part of the Clayton F. Smith Preserves.

RECREATION AMENITIES

The North Branch Bike Trail begins at the southeast corner of these preserves near the intersection of Caldwell and Devon Avenues and travels two miles north through the preserves continuing an additional 18 miles along the Chicago River. At the far southwest corner of the preserves is Caldwell Woods, a spot popular with families for its gentle sledding hills and the Whealan Pool Aquatic Center. In the north, mowed fields and picnic groves in Bunker Hill are ideal for kite flying and games of catch.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

These preserves follow the North Branch of the Chicago River and showcase a variety of different ecosystems including flatwoods, floodplain forest, oak woodlands, and open savannas that showcase a myriad of native wildflowers including blazing star, prairie sundrops, fringed gentian and rare orchids. Butterflies and songbirds can be found here and in fall woodcocks perform their unique mating dances at dusk.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Bunker Hill is accessed by Devon Avenue, Milwaukee Avenue, Caldwell Avenue, Touhy Avenue or Harts Road
- **Regional Access:** Bunker Hill is regionally accessed by I-94 to US-14 or I-90 to Avondale Road
- **Public Transportation:** Access is provided on Touhy Avenue at Caldwell Avenue by Pace Bus 290, which connects to the Howard CTA stop. Access is also provided by the Jefferson Park CTA Blue Line stop with a connection to CTA Bus 85A which stops at Tonty Avenue at Caldwell Avenue.
- **Trail Access:** North Branch Bike Trail access

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing wayfinding signage:** None
- **Restrooms:** Several comfort stations exist throughout these preserves
- **Parking:** Parking is ample. Some focus group participants suggested that there may be an overabundance of parking on the site.
- **Concessions:** Bike rentals
- **Utility Access:** Unknown
- **Other:** Former warming shelter on site

sense of place: bunker hill

biking warming shelter

restoration

BUNKERS
(old gold course)

year round use

aquatic center

PICNICS

picnic groves white fringed orchid

sledding hill

connection to City of Chicago

TRANSIT CORRIDOR

north branch
chicago river

bike rental/
staging area

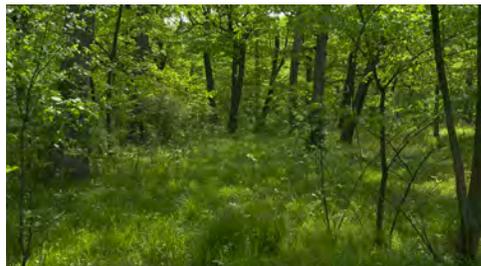
bio-diversity

VOLUNTEERING

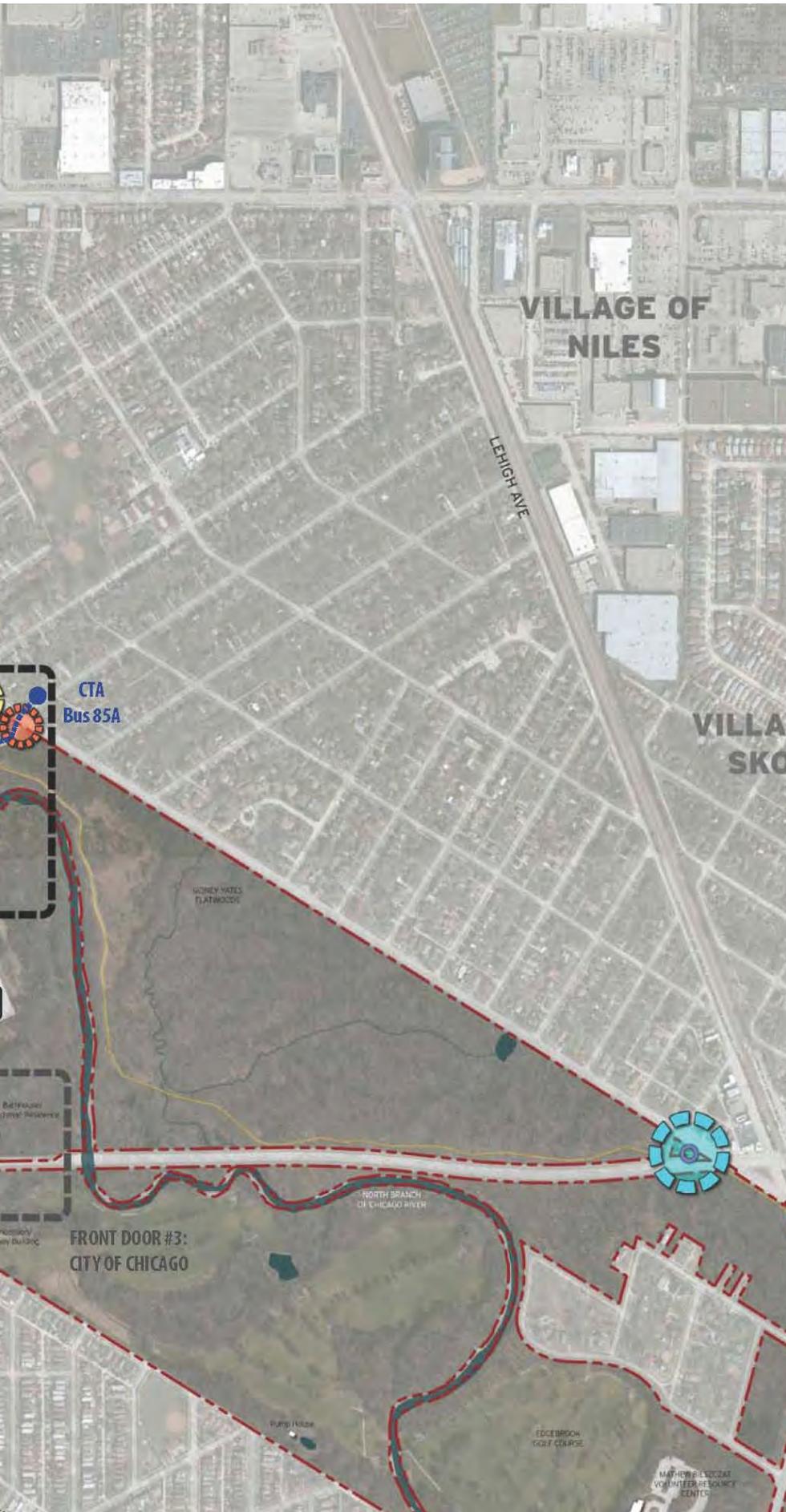
bike route

diversity trails

(20 mile paved trail)







LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives referenced three potential front door opportunity sites.

- Harts Road:** Along Harts Road, Bunker Hill has watercraft, bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular access points. These access points function separately however and each lack signage or design elements to communicate arrival or share information. Additionally, Harts Road was cited by stakeholders as a busy roadway which is difficult to cross and access. The triangle parcel at the Touhy Avenue intersection also provides a high visibility location for vehicular traffic to communicate information.
- Caldwell Avenue:** One of the primary vehicular access points to Bunker Hill is located along Caldwell Avenue. Near this entrance is a comfort station and trailhead. The Sidney Yates Flatwoods is located nearby as well. This access point is centrally located to many of the amenities located throughout Bunker Hill, however, there is a lack of wayfinding and signage to communicate this.
- City of Chicago:** Near the intersection of Milwaukee and Devon Avenues is the sledding hill, warming house and Whealan Pool Aquatic Center. This areas can accommodate a large amount of parking and is served by public transportation. Due to grant funding restrictions, this area can not be included in the design development study for the initial 11 priority gateway sites.

THATCHER WOODS

Near the historic homes of Oak Park and River Forest lie 245 acres of woodland along the Des Plaines River known collectively as Thatcher Woods. Oak savannas cover the uplands, with floodplain forests sweeping the low river valley. Visitors can learn about it all at the charming, historic Hal Tyrrell Trailside Museum of Natural History.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

In 1838 David C. Thatcher came to Chicago from New York and set up a mercantile business. After much success, he retired and moved to River Forest where he built a brick mansion, now occupied by the Trailside Museum. In March of 1917 the Board of Real Estate Committee presented a report stating that approximately 182 acres could be purchased with the understanding that "said tract shall be known in perpetuity by some name or designation which will contain the word Thatcher". In May of 1917, the title to this tract was acquired as Preserve No. 3. Later, in 1931, the Forest Preserves constructed the "field house" in Thatcher Woods, with parking space and an access drive from Chicago Avenue.

RECREATION AMENITIES

Thatcher Woods are primarily used for nature exploration and bird watching. An unmarked trail system follows the bends of the east side of the Des Plaines River. The footpaths, which can be muddy, provide access for hikers to the floodplain and bluffs. Elevations in the upland regions can reach 625 feet, dropping, sometimes abruptly, into the river floodplain. Visitors can explore native wildlife up close at the Trailside Museum of Natural History, just south of Chicago Avenue. This nature center is open year-round and is free. The museum is next to a large pond near Thatcher Woods Glen.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

In the north, floodplain forest gradually leads to a scenic river bluff. Views open up to colorful summer wildflowers in a prairie on the west side of the river. Some areas flood in the spring and summer, offering feeding grounds for wildlife. At the southern end of the preserve, oak savanna, native grasses and wildflowers offer spring beauty. Thatcher Woods represents one of the only remaining examples of quality floodplain forest left in Northeastern Illinois. Floodplain forests provide important benefits including slowing and storing the flow of water during heavy rainfalls and reducing flood damage downstream, and help to recharge the groundwater and improve surface

water quality. Floodplain forests are also extremely nutrient rich and provide excellent habitat for all kinds of animals including painted turtles, great white egrets, kingfishers, and pileated woodpeckers. Thatcher Woods also has more than 250 native plant species including wild coffee and spring beauty.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Thatcher Woods is accessible by utilizing Chicago Avenue or Thatcher Avenue
- **Regional Access:** Thatcher Woods is regionally accessible by utilizing I-290 to IL-171 or I-94 to IL-19
- **Public Transportation:** Access is provided by Metra from the River Forest Station, and a 0.4 mile walk north along Thatcher Avenue to Chicago Avenue. No bus service is available at this site.
- **Trail Access:** Many trails are unrecognized

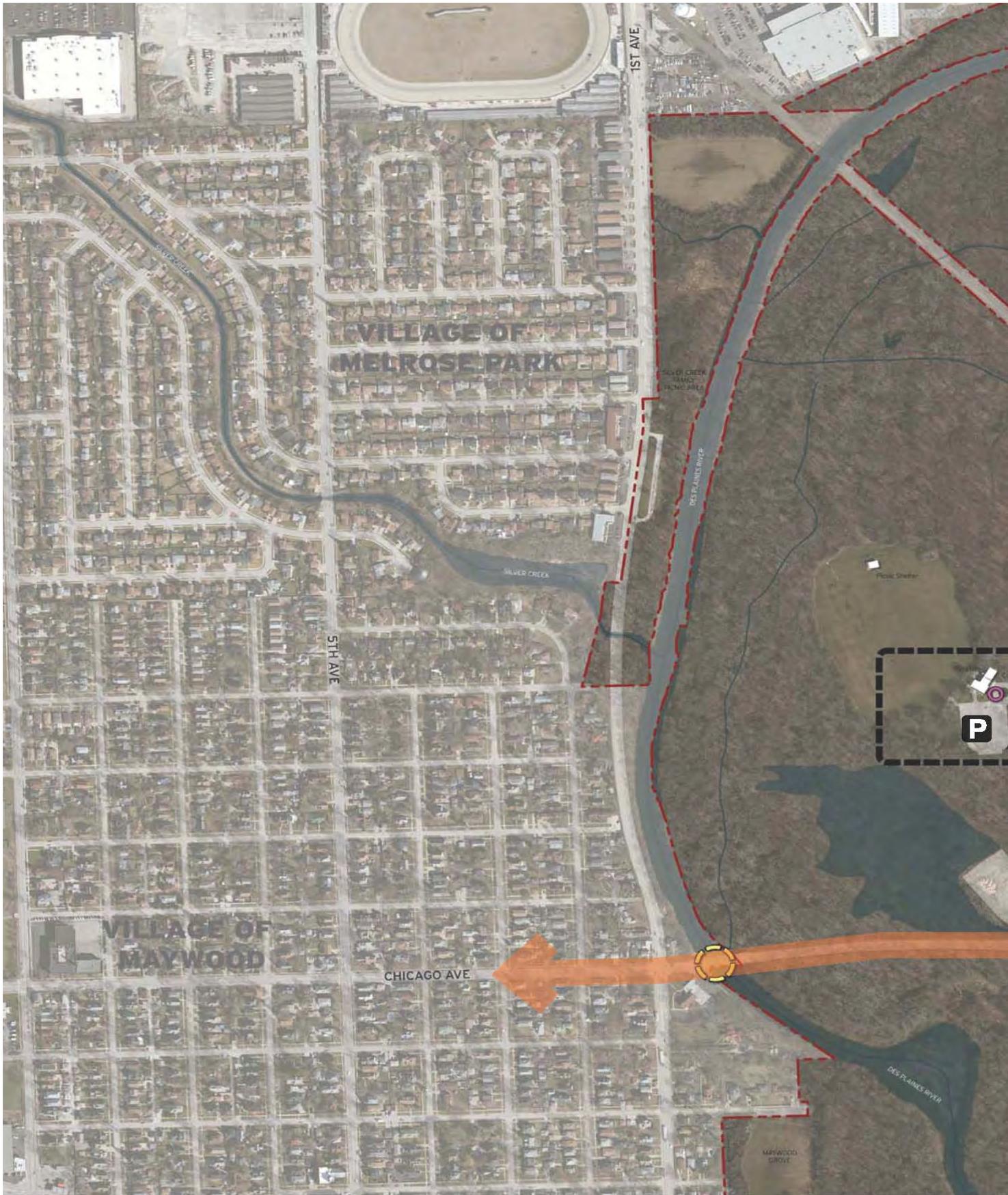
INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing wayfinding signage:** None
- **Restrooms:** Comfort stations exist at the Trailside Museum and Events Pavilion
- **Parking:** Parking is ample, however the lot near the Hal Tyrrell Trailside Museum can be prone to flooding
- **Concessions:** Event pavilion
- **Utility Access:** Unknown.
- **Other:** Hal Tyrrell Trailside Museum

sense of place: thatcher woods

gathering health **trailside** family underground railroad
 CHILDREN **nature**
 heritage **discovery** **EDUCATION**
birding event space
 recreation **volunteers** floodplain
EVENTS woods museum and bluffs
 footpaths neighborhoods **COMMUNITY RESOURCE**
des plaines public lost village **PAVILION**
river transportation **COMMUNITY ASSET** architecture







LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives expressed interest in two potential front door opportunity sites.

- Thatcher Pavilion:** This recently renovated event center and parking lot provide a scenic and inviting welcome point to Thatcher Woods. Signage, wayfinding and other design elements could be incorporated here to create a stronger connection to the Trailside Museum.
- Hal Tyrrell Trailside Museum:** This is a well known, highly visible and staffed location. Ample parking exists but should be improved to alleviate flooding. Stronger connections to the events pavilion could be made. There is a special interest in the role of public art to connect users from the museum to the event pavilion.

BEMIS WOODS

Bemis Woods, in Western Springs, is the westernmost forest preserve in a chain of sites that border Salt Creek from Western Springs to Brookfield. Nestled between the Forest Preserve District's Meadowlark Golf Course to the northwest and the Salt Creek Woods Nature Preserve to the east, the 1,020 acres Bemis Woods campus offers a wide range of recreational activities.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Bemis Woods was formerly known as "Camp Bemis" because a large youth camp was located in this area and was sponsored by Mrs. E. W. Bemis, a member of the Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners. North of Salt Creek there was one access drive which ran west from Wolf Road to a dam across the creek. The dam, constructed in 1923-24, provided a popular swimming and wading place until the creek became grossly polluted and such use was prohibited. In 1932, the dam was removed. Prior to 1936 there was no vehicular entrance into Bemis Woods South, between Ogden Avenue and Salt Creek. Construction of a vehicular entrance from Ogden Avenue with parking spaces later eliminated eleven miles of rutted trails made by automobiles driven through the preserve.

RECREATION AMENITIES

The well-marked, one-mile unpaved Salt Creek loop trail in the shade of oaks offers a leisurely hike for visitors of all ages. In the winter, Bemis offers over five miles of trail that provide varied cross-country skiing terrain. When not hiking, biking or paddling, visitors can gather with friends and family to take advantage of Bemis' seven picnic groves or large open fields that are great for games.

NATURAL AMENITIES

Salt Creek divides Bemis Woods into two sections, North and South. Both Bemis Woods North and South are considered excellent birding locations because of the creek habitat. A large variety of migrant songbirds, as well as cuckoos, indigo buntings and veeries, use this wooded area along Salt Creek. A variety of woodpeckers have been spotted in the area, including red-headed, red-bellied, downy, hairy and pileated varieties. Best bird viewing is usually during migration from early April to early June and mid-August to late October. Ducks and deer are also visible along the creek shores feeding on the wild blackberry.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Bemis Woods is accessed by Ogden Avenue, 31st Street or Wolf Road (which bisects the preserve). Access from Ogden Avenue can be difficult due to high traffic volumes. IDOT is planning improvements to the Wolf Road and Ogden Avenue intersection.
- **Regional Access:** Bemis Woods is regionally accessible by I-290/294 to US-34 or I-55 to US-34.
- **Public Transportation:** Access is provided by Metra at the Western Springs Metra Station and a 0.8 mile walk north via Wolf Road and Ogden Avenue to the main entrance on Ogden Avenue west of Wolf Road. No bus service is available at this site.
- **Trail Access:** Salt Creek trail access

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing wayfinding signage:** None
- **Parking:** Parking is ample but sometimes difficult to access due to access points being far apart and disconnected.
- **Concessions:** None
- **Utility Access:** Unknown
- **Other:** Proposed zip line at the historic toboggan house. Overlooks along the Salt Creek.

sense of place: bemis woods

RESIDENTIAL

WOLF ROAD

OGDEN AVENUE

proximity to Brookfield Zoo

TRAILS

kids

golf course

picnic groves

birding "hot spot"

salt creek

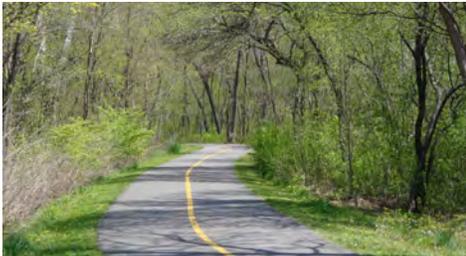
BIKES

volunteering

potential zipline

canoing/boating

RESTORATION





LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

**PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS
(FRONT DOOR SITES)**

During focus group discussions, representatives expressed interest in one potential front door opportunity sites.

- **Toboggan House:** The old toboggan shelter (proposed zip line) is a well-known architectural landmark in the community. The shelter is adjacent to several well visited, high capacity picnic groves. Providing wayfinding to this location would likely be necessary. Gateway elements could also be placed closer to Ogden Avenue which is a roadway utilized by regional commuters.

OAK FOREST

HERITAGE PRESERVE

“The Oak Forest Heritage Preserve is a site with a complex and interconnected set of stories of human history, archaeology, geology, ecology and natural history that span millennia. The property has seen changes in occupancy and use that have affected the health of those living on it and upon the land itself.” -Oak Forest Heritage Preserve Master Plan

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Oak Forest Heritage Preserve may be considered the most unique and unorthodox site within the Forest Preserves' holdings. It holds tremendous potential but also tremendous obstacles. A master plan was created and adopted by the Forest Preserves in July of 2012 to provide a framework for improvements that would enhance access to the site and tell of the area's unique history.

RECREATION AMENITIES

A master plan with many proposed amenities has been adopted but not fully implemented. Partnerships between the Forest Preserves and the Cook County Board of Health should be explored. Neighboring schools also provide an opportunity for partnerships as well as the City of Oak Forest, which has expressed interest in creating a stronger partnership.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

So named because of its proximity to the Oak Forest Hospital which, in turn, was so named for the predominately oak forest in the adjacent St. Mihiel Preserve, this site is home to ecologically rich Oak Savannas.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Oak Forest Heritage Preserve is accessed by 159th Street through the Health Center entrance gate. Future access is proposed utilizing Crawford Avenue to Fieldcrest Drive. This access point, however, has difficult visibility because of its location along a sharp curve with minimal sight lines.
- **Regional Access:** I-57 to 159th Street
- **Public Transportation Access:** Access is provided by Metra at the Oak Forest Metra Station and a short 0.5 mile walk east across the intersection of Cicero and 159th Street, and through the grounds of Oak Forest Health Center.
- **Trail Access:** Inner loop trail

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing Wayfinding Signage:** Signs are posted to direct patrons to the preserve entrance, however, there is a general perception is that the preserve is off-limits and under high security.
- **Restrooms:** None
- **Parking:** A designated preserve parking area on the Oak Forest Health Center property is currently holding Homeland Security Vehicles. A parking lot is being constructed off of Fieldcrest Road. Oak Forest city officials were open to the Forest Preserves utilizing the Metra station parking lot.
- **Concessions:** None. A visitor's center is proposed in the Master Plan. Future bike rentals may be located at the nearby Oak Forest Metra Station.
- **Utility Access:** Unknown

sense of place: oak forest heritage preserve

potential
trails

health center

HIDDEN TREASURE

interpretation

geology

history

ARCHEOLOGY

meadow

CEMETERY

mysterious

ECOLOGY

poor farm

HERITAGE

deer

ECOLOGY





Midlothian Meadows

159TH ST

FRONT DOOR #1:
OAK FOREST
HEALTH CENTER

To Oak
Forest
Metra
Station

P

Cook County
Oak Forest
Health Center

OAK FOREST HERITAGE PRESERVE

Coun
Cemet



Planned Pedestrian
Connection to Park

Oak Forest
Park

CITY OF
OAK FOREST



LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives expressed interest in two potential front door opportunity sites.

- Oak Forest Health Center:** Focus group participants agreed that this was the natural location for an entry point. City of Oak Forest officials were eager to build partnerships and utilize their Metra station as a staging area with bike rentals and interpretive displays to communicate the preserves unique history. Wayfinding would be needed to direct visitors from the train station to the preserve entrance.
- Old Gun Club:** The Forest Preserves are currently constructing an access point and parking lot at the recently purchased gun club property. Focus group participants were hesitant about this location being designated as a "front door", mainly due to poor visibility at the sharp curve of Fieldcrest Drive.

PALOS-PULASKI COMPLEX

The 15,000-acre Palos Preserves offer some of the most rugged terrain the Forest Preserves have to offer, attracting runners and mountain bikers looking for challenging trails. The expansive network of lakes, trails and scenic vistas can be enjoyed at any pace, however, and those who take it slow have a better chance of seeing the unique wildlife of these preserves.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Pulaski Woods was named for Casimir Pulaski who, after being commander-in-chief of the patriot forces in Poland, was exiled and came to America. In the Revolutionary War, after volunteering his services, George Washington made Casimir Pulaski Brigadier General and Chief of Cavalry. A boulder monument to him is located in Pulaski Woods.

In the 1920s, from Archer Avenue southward, Maple Lake Woods was commonly known as Maple Hill because of the abundance of sugar maples and their gorgeous autumn foliage. In 1924, the Cook County Highway Department began constructing a new intersection at 95th Street and Archer Avenue. The Forest Preserves, in conjunction with the Cook County Highway Department, contracted for the construction of a dam across the deep narrow ravine which was the outlet for 50 acres of lowland south of 95th Street. This area is now submerged by what was appropriately named Maple Lake. Until about 1939, when it was discontinued for reasons pertaining to public health, swimming was an exceedingly popular pastime on the south shore of Maple Lake. There was a bathhouse, toilets and concession stands to accommodate the public. With little fishing, the lake had become overpopulated with goldfish, carp and millions of stunted bluegills. A fish management program was instituted, including rowboat rentals for fishermen.

RECREATION AMENITIES

The Palos Preserves offer multiple entry points to the vast Palos Trail system, an unpaved network of limestone gravel trails and natural surface trails, most of which are open to hikers, bikers, horseback riders and cross-country skiers. The maze of trails provides a number of length and difficulty options for trail users, along with the opportunity to visit several sloughs (shallow lakes). Palos Preserves are also popular among mountain bikers for its interesting and often exhilarating hills and turns. The official staging area for mountain biking is at Pulaski Woods South. These natural surface paths are also good for hiking and running. The Chicago Area Mountain Bikers help maintain these trails and promote responsible trail use.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

The Palos-Pulaski Complex is the largest Forest Preserve complex in Cook County. Tall oak trees, white ash, and the uncommon spicebush can be found there as well as native wildflowers such as the rose mallow. The marsh areas are popular with ducks and other water loving birds such as egrets and herons. The bright orange (and poisonous) jack-O-lantern mushroom can also be found there.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Archer Avenue, LaGrange Road or 95th Street. 107th Street and South Kean Avenue are less utilized.
- **Regional Access:** I-55 to US-12 or LaGrange Road to 95th Street.
- **Public Transportation Access:** Metra's Willow Springs Station provides access from at the intersection of Archer Avenue, Willow Springs and Flavin Roads. From the station, a 2.0 mile trip would lead to 95th Street and Wolf Road along Flavin Road. No bus service is available at this site.
- **Trail Access:** Cal-Sag, John Husar I&M Canal and Centennial Trails access
- **Other:** IDOT improvements at Archer and 95th are planned. There is a need for improvements at the Wolf Road triangle as well. Trail wayfinding can be difficult.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing Wayfinding Signage:** None
- **Restrooms:** Located at most trail heads
- **Parking:** Ample, but spread out and difficult to locate
- **Concessions:** Rentals and bait house at Maple Lake Boat House. Camp Bullfrog.
- **Utility Access:** Unknown
- **Other:** Picnic shelters. Numerous marked and unmarked trails. Little Red School House Nature Center.

sense of place: palos-pulaski complex

BOATING

**little red
schoolhouse**

**mountain
bike staging**

team stewardship

**bullfrog
lake**

CAMPING

maple lake

BEAUTY

**OUTDOOR
RECREATION**

FISHING

**horseback
riding**

**nature
preserve**

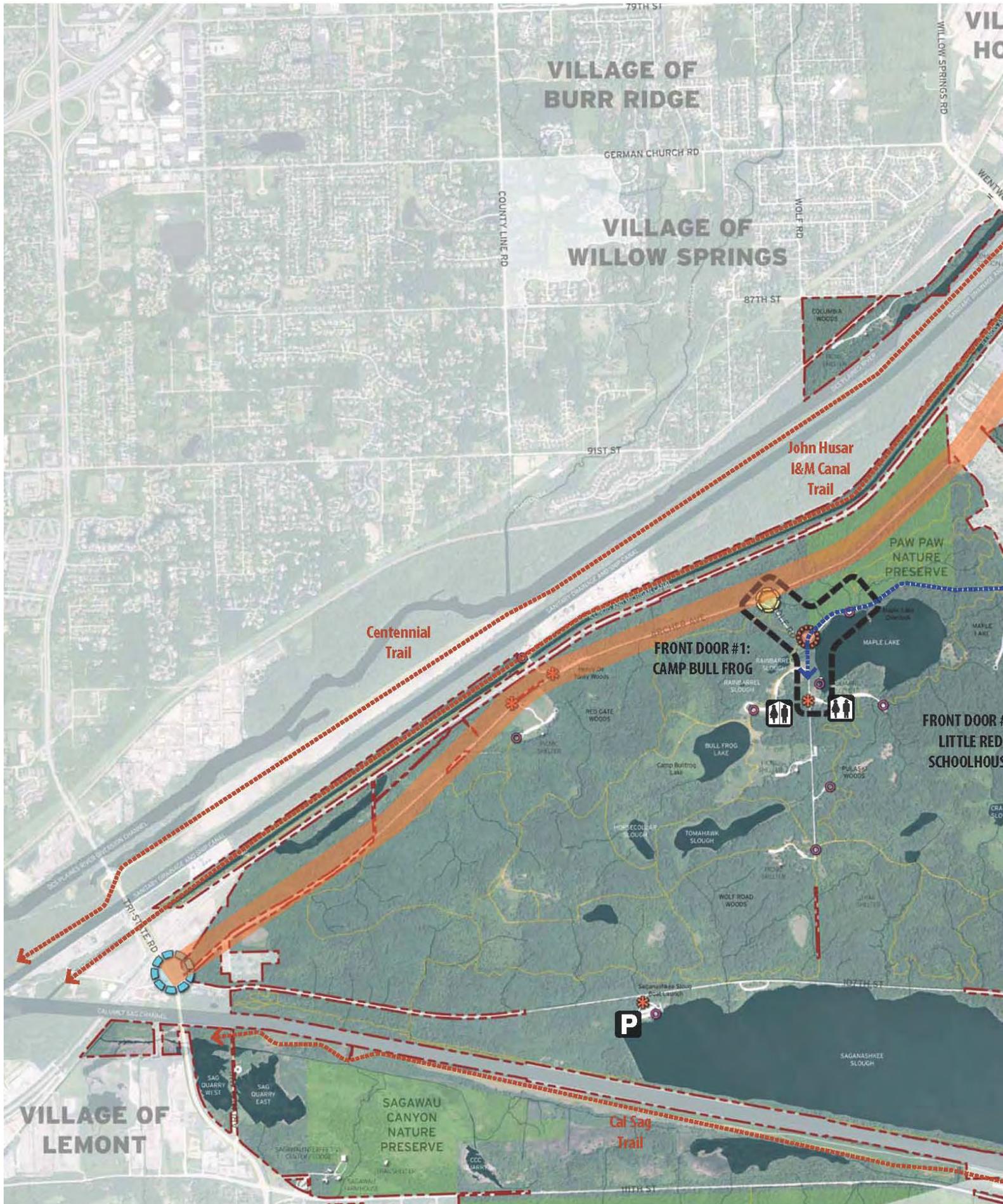
RESTORATION

**multi-use
trails**

HABITAT

**unpaved
trails**





VILLAGE OF BURR RIDGE

VILLAGE OF WILLOW SPRINGS

VILLAGE OF LEMONT

Centennial Trail

John Husar I&M Canal Trail

FRONT DOOR #1: CAMP BULL FROG

FRONT DOOR #2: LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

PAW PAW NATURE PRESERVE

SAGAWAU CANYON NATURE PRESERVE

P

Cal Sag Trail

79TH ST

GERMAN CHURCH RD

COUNTY LINE RD

WOLF RD

87TH ST

91ST ST

TRIP ST

CALHUNT SAC CHANNEL

113TH ST

WILLOW SPRINGS RD

VIL HO

WENTW

COLUMBIA WOODS

PAW PAW NATURE PRESERVE

MAPLE LAKE

FRONT DOOR #1: CAMP BULL FROG

FRONT DOOR #2: LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

CAMP BULL FROG LAKE

TOMAHAWK SLOUGH

WOLF ROAD WOODS

SAGANASHREE SLOUGH

SAG QUARRY WEST

SAG QUARRY EAST

SAGAWAU EFFICIENT CENTER

SAGAWAU LEARNING HOUSE

CCC PARK

SAGANASHREE SLOUGH

WOLF ROAD WOODS

PULASKI WOODS

MAPLE LAKE

RED GATE WOODS

HENRY OF TOWN WOODS

RAINFORREST SLOUGH

CAMP BULL FROG LAKE

TOMAHAWK SLOUGH

WOLF ROAD WOODS

SAGANASHREE SLOUGH

SAG QUARRY WEST

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MAPLE LAKE

RED GATE WOODS

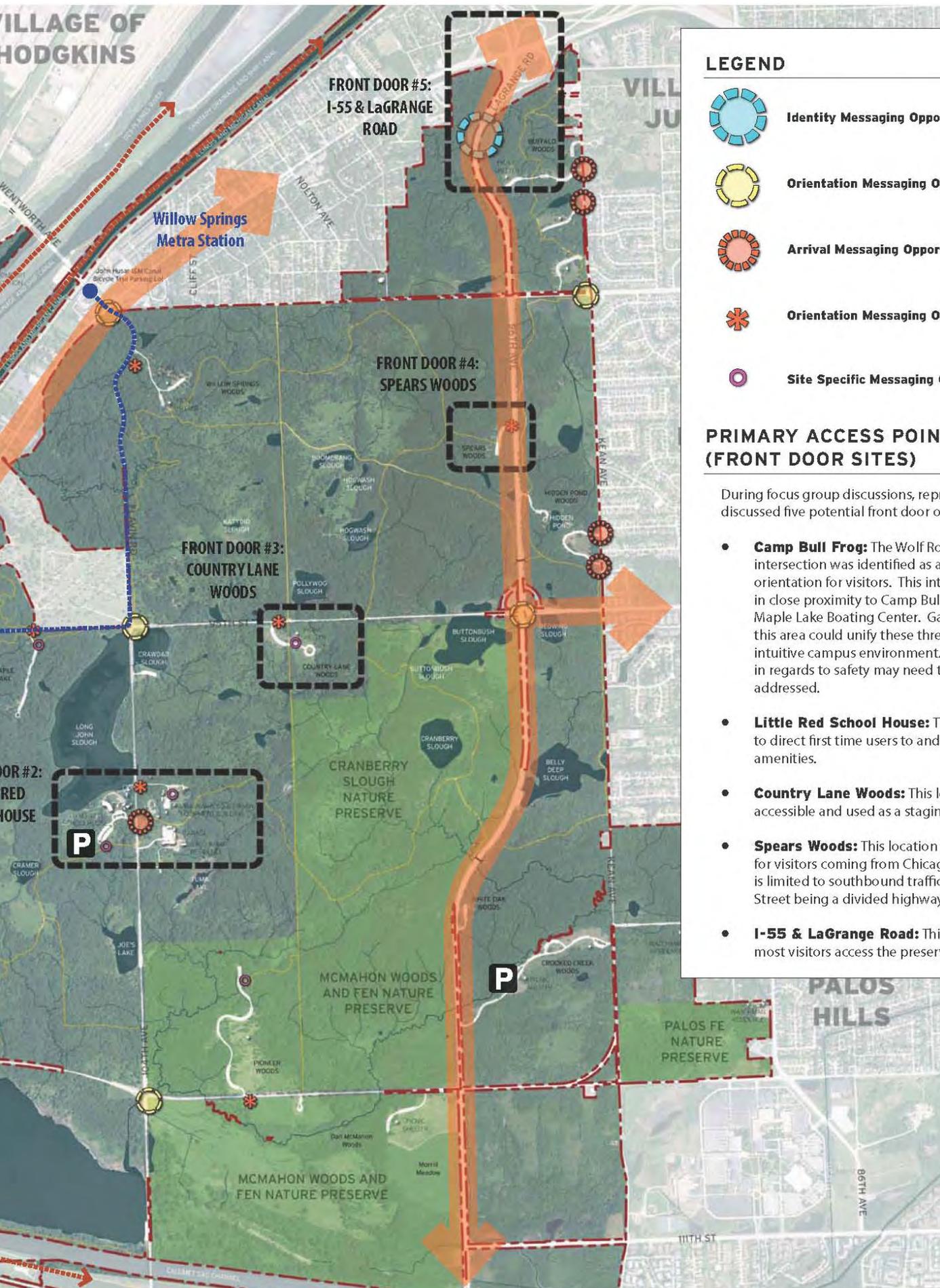
HENRY OF TOWN WOODS

RAINFORREST SLOUGH

CAMP BULL FROG LAKE

TOMAHAWK SLOUGH

VILLAGE OF HODGKINS



LEGEND

-  Identity Messaging Opportunity
-  Orientation Messaging Opportunity
-  Arrival Messaging Opportunity
-  Orientation Messaging Opportunity
-  Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives discussed five potential front door opportunity sites.

- **Camp Bull Frog:** The Wolf Road and 95th Street intersection was identified as a key point of orientation for visitors. This intersection is located in close proximity to Camp Bull Frog and the Maple Lake Boating Center. Gateway elements in this area could unify these three elements into an intuitive campus environment. Roadway access in regards to safety may need to be studied and addressed.
- **Little Red School House:** This location is easy to direct first time users to and offers the most amenities.
- **Country Lane Woods:** This location is easily accessible and used as a staging area for REI.
- **Spears Woods:** This location is easily accessible for visitors coming from Chicago. However, access is limited to southbound traffic due to a 96th Street being a divided highway.
- **I-55 & LaGrange Road:** This location is where most visitors access the preserves.

PALOS HILLS

PALOS FE NATURE PRESERVE

86TH AVE

111TH ST

DAN RYAN WOODS

One of the few forest preserves within the city of Chicago, 257-acre Dan Ryan Woods is a popular and well-loved family destination on the South Side. Playfields, picnic groves, a sledding hill and a paved trail provide ample activities for all visitors to enjoy. While best known as a gathering spot for families and friends, Dan Ryan Woods also supports a large array of native plants, animals and migratory birds.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Originally purchased in 1937 and named “Beverly Hills”, Dan Ryan Woods is now named for Daniel Ryan, Sr., member of the Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners from its organization in February of 1915. He also served as president of the Board from 1921 until his death in 1923. Dan Ryan Woods was designated as a priority site for recreational enhancements in the 2013 Recreation Master Plan. Recommended recreational enhancements include winter recreation, nature, art, culture and heritage.

RECREATION AMENITIES

The Dan Ryan Woods Central and West entrances access some of the most popular attractions at this preserve: a sledding hill and playfields. The Major Taylor Trail starts at the eastern edge of the farthest north parking lot at Dan Ryan Woods North. This paved multi-use trail runs along the edge of the preserve for about 1.5 miles to 91st Street. The trail continues southeast for another 5.5 miles, eventually connecting to Whistler Woods south of the Little Calumet River. Picnic areas are available throughout the preserve, including shelters for larger groups that can be rented for large gatherings up to 350 people. Large expanses of open fields make it easy for small groups to lay down a picnic blanket as well.

Dan Ryan Woods South, off of Western Avenue, south of 87th Street, is more removed from the hustle and bustle of the northern part of the preserve. Visitors to this part of the preserve can access unpaved trails into both open and wooded areas, as well as a unique system of historic limestone aqueducts.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

Dan Ryan Woods is the last remaining undeveloped portion of Blue Island, one of the highest points in Chicago and once an island in ancient Lake Chicago. South of 87th Street, the east side slopes into the low, flat glacial lake plain. The site preserves remnants of woodland and savanna plant communities, flush with wild ginger, may apple, trout lily, trillium and more.

For more than 10 years, volunteer groups have removed invasive species and promoted native trees and wildflowers and restored eroding slopes. In one area, a “Migratory Bird Makeover” area was created consisting of native shrubs, grasses and wildflowers to provide food and cover areas for migratory birds, as well as aesthetic beauty and erosion control. Projects like this will increase bird species numbers at Dan Ryan Woods, but already visitors may find black-throated green warblers, nashville warblers, chestnut-sided warblers, scarlet tanagers, rose-breasted grosbeaks and yellow-bellied flycatchers.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Western Avenue or 87th Street
- **Regional Access:** I-94 to 83rd Street
- **Trail Access:** Major Taylor Trail access
- **Public Transportation Access:** Access to the Pavilion and central area of Dan Ryan Woods is available via CTA Buses 87 and 349 with stops at Western Avenue and 87th Street. The Metra 92nd Street - Beverly Hills station provides access to the most southeast portion of the site.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing Wayfinding Signage:** None
- **Restrooms:** Comfort stations are adequate
- **Parking:** Parking lots are adequate but disconnected from one another.
- **Concessions:** Unknown
- **Utility Access:** Unknown

sense of place: dan ryan woods

trails

woods

**HISTORY OF
SOCCER GAMES**

**"migratory bird
makeover"**

volunteers

**connection to
Major Taylor Trail**

**HISTORIC
LIMESTONE
AQUEDUCTS**

FITNESS

**picnic
groves**

**cultural
history**

**highest
point in
Chicago**

**event
pavilion**

**sledding hills
(formed by
glaciers)**





79TH ST

WESTERN AVE

FRONT DOOR
83rd STREET

CITY OF
CHICAGO

FRONT DOOR #3:
87th STREET
& WESTERN

CTA Bus
87 and 349

FRONT DOOR #2:
DAN RYAN
WOODS SOUTH

VILLAGE OF
EVERGREEN PARK

DAN RYAN
WOODS NORTH

DAN RYAN
WOODS CENTRAL

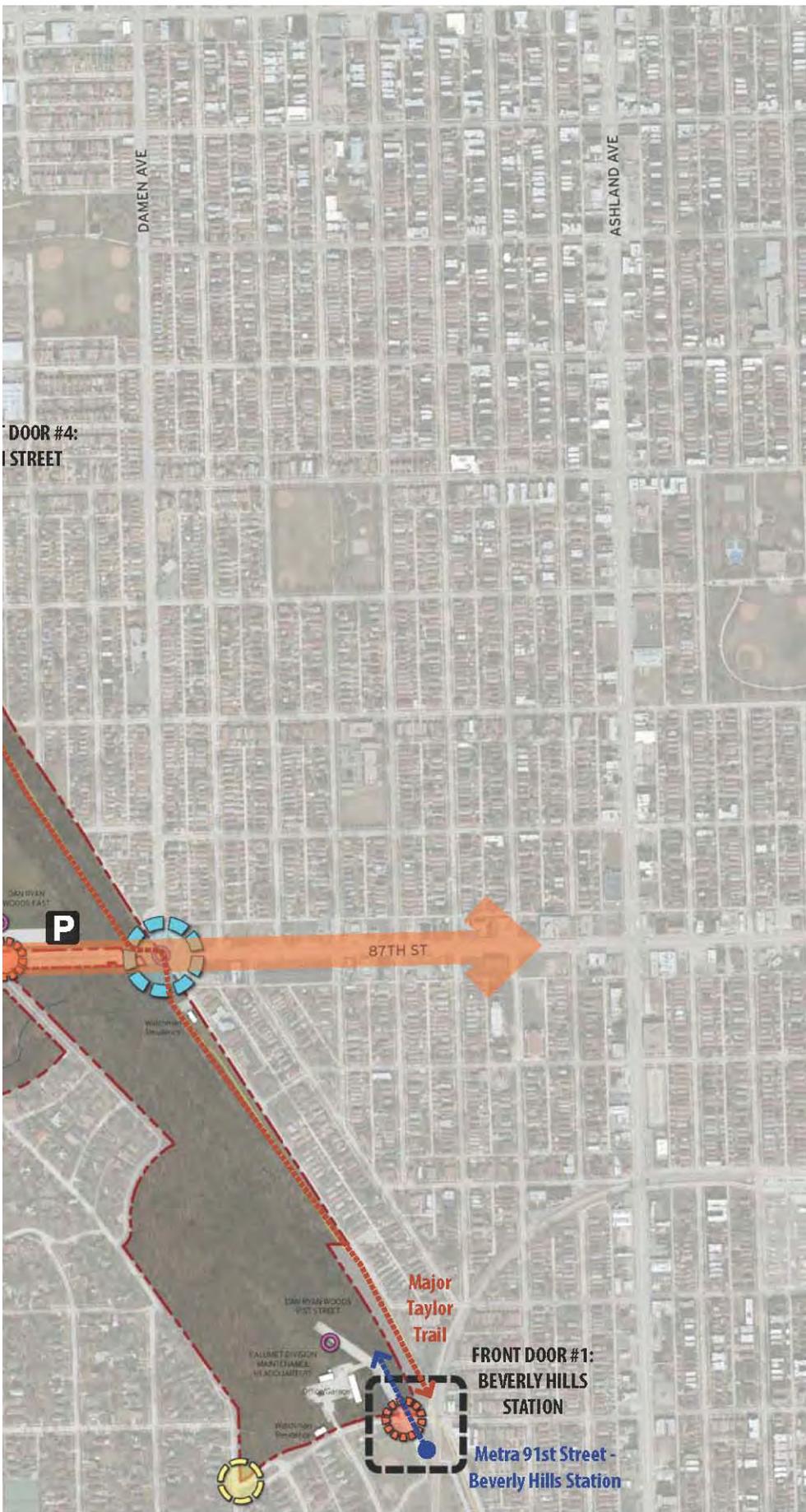
DAN RYAN WOODS
BICYCLE DOCKING STATION

DAN RYAN
WOODS WEST

CALMIEY MAINTENANCE
DIVISION SUB-HEADQUARTERS

DAN RYAN
WOODS SOUTH

DAN RYAN
WOODS EAST



LEGEND

-  **Identity Messaging Opportunity**
-  **Orientation Messaging Opportunity**
-  **Arrival Messaging Opportunity**
-  **Orientation Messaging Opportunity**
-  **Site Specific Messaging Opportunity**

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives discussed many potential front door opportunity sites. Participants agreed it would be ideal for Dan Ryan Woods to promote the entire, “campus” in a single location.

- **Beverly Hills Station:** This area is close to a Metra Station and has received commercial revitalization efforts. Additionally, there is a strong connection to the Beverly neighborhood located to the south and Major Taylor Trail. The station house also provides a place for gateway element opportunities.
- **Dan Ryan Woods South:** This location is not well known but has an underutilized parking area. Stronger trail connections from the parking area to the 87th Street underpass could highlight this area.
- **87th Street & Western:** This area was noted as being the most logical front door location due to the new Visitor’s Center, parking lot, access to public transit and high visibility. The desire for a stronger connection to the 87th Street underpass, pavilion and sledding hill were noted.
- **83rd Street:** This location was noted as the existing front door for most walkers and picnickers.

SHABBONA WOODS

The Shabbona Woods site includes Sand Ridge Nature Center, Camp Shabbona, and Green Lake Aquatics Center. These three elements function as a campus on approximately 570 acres of land, including prairies, oak savannas and woodlands on ancient beaches and sand dunes, marshes and ponds.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

During the last great Ice Age, Lake Chicago covered most Cook County. This water stood 40 feet deep over what is now Sand Ridge Nature Center. As the water found its way to the ocean, the level of the lake dropped, rose, and dropped again, forming beaches and low sand dunes on many temporary shorelines. Eventually, prairies and woodlands grew on the sandy soil of the long ridges left behind as the lake receded.

The preserve of Sand Ridge Nature Center is on former farmland in an unincorporated area of the town of South Holland. Because of the sandy soil and large wetlands, much of the land is marginal for farming, and it appears that much of the property was not heavily used. The original Nature Center building was built in 1962 and immediately became an educational destination for school groups and individuals. In 1992, the present Nature Center building was reconstructed to be handicap accessible and to better serve the changing needs of the public, with more exhibit space and a large classroom.

RECREATION AMENITIES

Camp Shabbona Woods features small three-season cabins mulch tent pads and a clearing for activities. The new Green Lake Family Aquatic Center offers a state-of-the-art bath house with showers, lockers, concessions, mini water slide, lazy river, splash pool with water cannons, drop buckets and climbing features. Sand Ridge Nature Center offers trails for easy hiking, from ¼-mile to 2 miles long. Exhibits on the natural and cultural history of the Calumet region area also available.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

Sand Ridge Nature Preserve is a site that enjoys the highest protection that a natural area can have in Illinois because of its' remarkable biodiversity. The State of Illinois designates the highest quality natural lands in the state as "Nature Preserves." With that title come increased levels of legal protection and management.

The site includes a variety of ecosystems including several small sand prairies that are home to very unique flowers such as the prickly pear cactus. The woodlands on this site feature several species of oak trees, as well as unusual trees such as sassafras, quaking aspen and bald cypress. Wetlands can also be found here, as well as vernal ponds that serve as nurseries for chorus frogs.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** 159th Street or Torrence Avenue
- **Regional Access:** I-94 to River Oaks Drive and Paxton Avenue
- **Trail Access:** Burnham Greenway access
- **Public Transportation Access:** Access to this site is available by Pace Bus 364, stopping at 159th Street and Paxton Avenue or Pace Bus 358 stopping along Torrence Avenue and 159th Street east of Torrence Avenue.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing Wayfinding Signage:** Sand Ridge Nature Center has a directional sign along 159th Street directing westbound traffic to turn north onto Paxton Avenue.
- **Restrooms:** Comfort stations are located throughout
- **Parking:** Parking is adequate. Some focus group participants suggested that there may be an overabundance of parking near the Aquatic Center.
- **Concessions:** Concessions exist at the Green Lake Aquatic Center as well as at Camp Shabbona.
- **Utility Access:** Unknown

sense of place: shabbona woods

GREEN LAKE

woods

destination

youth programs

aquatic center

nature preserve

MARSH

WILDLIFE

boardwalks

torrence avenue

CAMPING

MILLENNIUM RESERVE

education

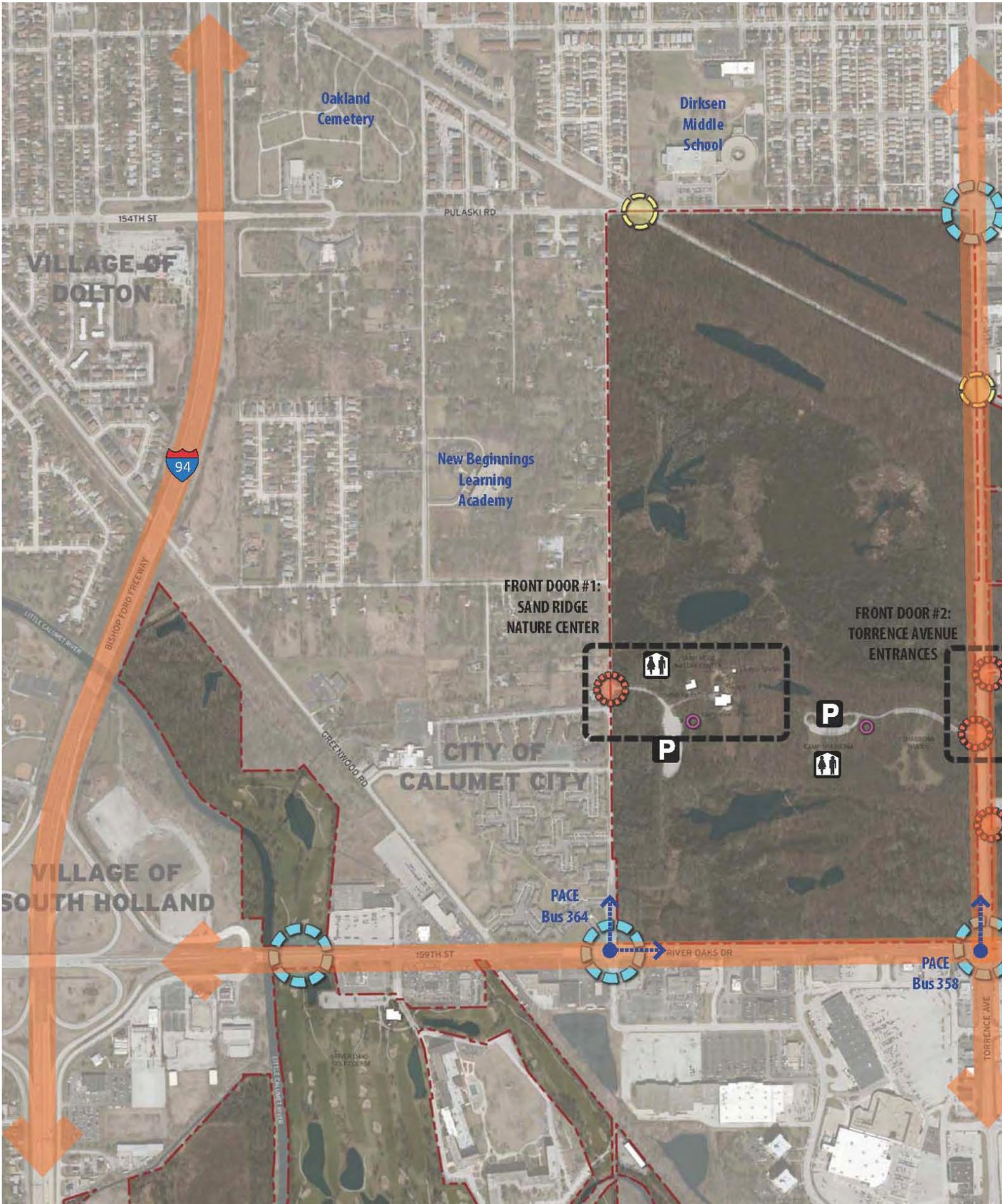
ancient beaches and sand dunes

sand ridge nature center

GLACIAL

SETTLERS' DAY





Oakland Cemetery

Dirksen Middle School

154TH ST

PULASKI RD

VILLAGE OF DOLTON

94

BISHOP FORD FREEWAY

New Beginnings Learning Academy

FRONT DOOR #1: SAND RIDGE NATURE CENTER

FRONT DOOR #2: TORRENCE AVENUE ENTRANCES

CITY OF CALUMET CITY

GREENWOOD RD

VILLAGE OF SOUTH HOLLAND

PACE Bus 364

159TH ST

RIVER OAKS DR

PACE Bus 358

TORRENCE AVE

INTERSTATE 94

SPRING LAKE GOLF COURSE



LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives expressed interest in two potential front door opportunity sites.

- Sand Ridge Nature Center:** This was considered the most logical location for a front door mainly because it is well known, staffed and has ample parking. Additionally, it's proximity to trail connections and Camp Shabbona is a draw for visitors.
- Torrence Avenue Entrances:** Focus group participants agreed it would be ideal to find a way to connect Green Lake Aquatic Center to Sand Ridge Nature Center and Camp Shabbona. Both visual and physical connections across Torrence Avenue would need to be enhanced.

SAUK TRAIL WOODS

An ancient path known as the Great Sauk Trail stretches 400 miles, crossing the southern edge of Cook County, and forms the southern boundary of Sauk Trail Woods Forest Preserve. Thorn Creek cuts through the middle of this preserve and forms Sauk Lake within its steep valley walls. The sweeping views and five miles of paved trails draw visitors to this preserve.

site qualities & analysis

SITE HISTORY

Sauk Trail Lake was formed when Thorn Creek was dammed for the construction of 26th Street from Euclid Avenue to Western Avenue. Water filled the steep walls of the creek banks and for many years the lake was a popular place for swimming. There were two beaches, however, the water later became so polluted that swimming was prohibited.

RECREATION AMENITIES

Today, the long and narrow Sauk Trail Lake between the ridges is a picturesque backdrop for hiking and picnicking. The Thorn Creek Trail forms a loop around the lake and can be directly reached from the Sauk Trail Woods North, Central and South entrances. The paved loop is about 3.5 miles and is mostly shaded by the surrounding woods. An additional 1.5-mile "purple" segment runs south near the intersection of Forest Preserve Drive and Sauk Trail Road, through King's Grove Forest Preserve. The paved trails are open to hikers, cyclists, in-line skaters and cross-country skiers.

The South, Central and North entrances each offer a view of Sauk Lake and large, canopied shelters for picnickers. Shoreline fishing is permitted in the lake, although a dam on the Little Calumet River keeps out most fish besides carp. The Central entrance has an impressive picnic shelter (one of the largest built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s) with two fireplaces and a patio overlooking the lake. Sauk Trail Woods East is further removed from the lake, though it offers a wide open area for large groups and games. The East grove connects to the Thorn Creek Trail by a crosswalk across Forest Preserve Drive.

NATURAL AREA AMENITIES

As Thorn Creek flows into the Little Calumet River, it is a popular stopping point for migratory birds in late fall and early spring. Visitors have seen wood ducks, osprey, white-eyed vireos, yellowthroats and towhees. Hikers can see gray-headed coneflower, Rudbeckia and fragrant plants like mountain mint along the trail. A marsh in the northwest corner of the preserve is home to aquatic plants and grasses.

ACCESSIBILITY

- **Local Access:** Western Avenue, Steger Road or Ashland Avenue
- **Regional Access:** I-294 to Sauk Trail Road
- **Trail Access:** Thorn Creek Trail access
- **Public Transportation Access:** Access is provided by PACE Bus route 367 along Western Avenue.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Existing Wayfinding Signage:** None
- **Restrooms:** Unknown
- **Parking:** Parking is ample to support site amenities
- **Concessions:** None
- **Utility Access:** Unknown

sense of place: sauk trail woods

**SAUK
LAKE**

dam

**regional
trails**

**thorn
creek**

**sauk
trail**

BRIDGE

**CCC pavilions
(civilian conservation corps)**





LEGEND



Identity Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Arrival Messaging Opportunity



Orientation Messaging Opportunity



Site Specific Messaging Opportunity

PRIMARY ACCESS POINTS (FRONT DOOR SITES)

During focus group discussions, representatives expressed interest in three potential front door opportunity sites.

- **Dam Site:** This location offers high visibility and will receive trail enhancements in the near future. Additionally, focus group participants were intrigued by the proposed removal of the dam and the potential for ensuing ecological restoration and interpretive displays.
- **Historic CCC Structure:** This locations was also suggested as a front door site. The historic structure is not well known nor is it easy to locate. However, the location is central, has ample parking and provides access to the lake. With improved wayfinding and interpreting, participants agreed this location would ideal.
- **Western Avenue & 34th Street:** This location offers high visibility along with connections to Will County and Thorn Creek.

About the Forest Preserves of Cook County

Established in 1914, the Forest Preserves of Cook County is the oldest urban conservation district in the nation, managing nearly 70,000 acres of open land for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public. The Forest Preserves strives to protect and restore the county's diverse ecosystems, so all our unique native plants and animals can live and thrive. Each year, millions of people use these lands and facilities to enjoy or study nature, bicycle, hike, fish, cross-country ski, picnic, golf, canoe or simply relax in a large preserve that leaves urban life behind.

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

General Headquarters, 536 N. Harlem Ave, River Forest, IL 60305

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This planning effort was made possible, in part, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Healthy HotSpot initiative led by the Cook County Department of Public Health. The Healthy HotSpot initiative aims to build healthy places in suburban Cook County through community partnerships that make healthy living easier.

