Lakefront Improvement Plan (Grand Avenue to North Avenue) and the Lake Shore Drive Redesign and Reconstruction Plan

Statement by Parks Taskforce and the Board of the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents (SOAR) 08/29/13

SOAR has long supported and been instrumental in the development of the Lakefront Improvement Plan. The key components of the plan arc:

1) The use of landfill to create additional parkland between Ohio Street Beach and Oak Street Beach
2) The creation of a modern interchange at Chicago Avenue where it intersects with Lake Shore Drive.
3) Elimination of the curve where Lake Shore Drive passes Oak Street Beach at East Lake Shore Drive. The most viable plan includes moving Oak Street Beach to the east, which would create a significant new park between the Inner-Drive and the reconfigured Outer-Drive.
4) Reconfiguring and enhancing the northern entrance to North Michigan Avenue.
5) The creation of additional parkland between Oak Street Beach and North Avenue Beach in the area between Lake Shore Drive and Lake Michigan.
6) Development of one of the barrier islands proposed by Daniel Burnham north of Oak Street Beach to protect the shoreline between Oak Street Beach and North Avenue Beach.
7) The creation of modern underpasses or other means of accessing the Lakefront.

The Lakefront Improvement Plan is a major component of the current Central Area Plan and compliments the Lake Shore Drive Redesign and Reconstruction Plan:

1) The curve at East Lake Shore Drive is a major traffic hazard. Its elimination will save lives and eliminate a major bottleneck.
2) The creation of an interchange at Chicago Avenue will greatly improve access to Streeterville, which has seen a significant growth with respect to its medical and educational district as well as its residential population over the last fifty (50) years.
3) The creation of additional parkland between Lake Shore Drive and Lake Michigan will protect the roadway from the perennial problem of waves coming over Lake Shore Drive and creating hazardous water and ice buildups on the Drive as well as periodically closing the Drive.
4) Reconfiguration of the entrance to North Michigan Avenue will improve traffic flow and enhance the experience of entering one of the most important retail streets in the United States.
5) Whether by redesigned pedestrian underpasses or walkways over Lake Shore Drive, the Lake Shore Drive Redesign and Reconstruction Plan will greatly improve access to Chicago’s Lakefront Parks.
6) All of the major components of the Lakefront Improvement Plan are included in Chicago’s Central Area Plan.

Secondary benefits of these two projects include:

1) The creation of approximately sixty (60) additional acres of parkland for the Streeterville neighborhood, which has the least parkland per capita of any neighborhood in Chicago.
2) The enhancement of the Chicago’s lakefront park system by creating an additional mile of park between Ohio Street Beach and North Avenue Beach.
3) Since the revetments east of Lake Shore Drive need to be replaced, the timing is ideal to move the revetments further east and, in the process, protect Lake Shore Drive from storm waves and create additional parkland.

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Proposed Lakefront Improvements

Grand Avenue to North Avenue
Chicago, IL
Regional and birds eye views of the Chicago plan, and a picture of Daniel Burnham, all circa 1909.

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL
Summaries of central area projects, historical photographs of Lake Shore Drive and bridges

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL
Existing conditions with Olive Park on left, and North Street beach visible on the right.

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL.
Project Goals:
- Provide direct connection between lakefront and neighborhoods.
- Expand park space available to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Mitigate Lakeshore Drive hazards and noise.
- Create “green” terminus to Michigan Avenue.
- Develop shoreline protection measures.
- Introduce Landscape elements appropriate to Lake Michigan shoreline.

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL
Proposed character of North Lake Shore Drive proposed Improvements

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL.

- Relax S Curve to Run below Green Underpass
- North Avenue Beach
- Oak Street Beach
- New Break Water Island
- Connected Lakeshore Park
- Expanded Promenade
- Olive Park
Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL
Left: Oak Street Existing Conditions

Right: Oak Street Beach with proposed improvements

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL
Left: Lakeshore Park and Promenade Existing Conditions
Right: Lakeshore Park and Promenade with proposed improvements and expansion

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL
Aerial view of Lake Shore Drive proposed improvements

Proposed Lakefront Improvements, Chicago, IL

- Relaxing "S" Curve
- New Break Water Island
- Oak Street Beach
- Run below Green Underpass
- Connected Lakeshore Park
- Expanded Promenade
- Olive Park
- Connected Lakeshore Park

Proposed Improvements
In Conclusion:

- This plan will add nearly 60 acres of park land area and 1.2 miles (6,258 feet) of additional shoreline.

- This will be a legacy project for Chicago, emphasizing ideas and concepts reflected in the Burnham Plan, efforts to preserve and enhance the lakefront, and the Central Area Action Plan.

- The project is a complement to memorialize the centennial of the Burnham Plan.

- The inclusion of highway reconstruction and replacement of the deteriorated revetments along this portion of the shoreline enhances the possibility of multiple funding sources.