



The Master Plan for Horseshoe Lake Park Shaker Heights, Ohio

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Master Plan reflects the input and contributions of many people from the communities of Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights. Attendees to public meetings held in May 2003 and November 2004 contributed greatly to our understanding of Horseshoe Lake Park's current use and future direction.

We thank everyone who has been involved in the creation of this Master Plan, which sets a path for the future success of Horseshoe Lake Park as a community resource.

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THE HISTORY OF HORSESHOE LAKE PARK

Horseshoe Lake Park is an approximately 60-acre public park in Shaker Heights, Ohio. As one of two mill ponds built by the Shaker community that settled this region in the mid-1800s, Horseshoe Lake has a rich history that stretches from the Shaker days through the development of Shaker Heights as a planned community in the early twentieth century, to the present day.

The Shaker Lakes Parklands, 300 acres of land surrounding Doan Brook and the Shaker Lakes, were conveyed to the City of Cleveland by the Shaker Heights Land Company in 1895. The parklands continue to be owned by the City of Cleveland but are maintained by Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights in accordance with a long-term lease agreement between the two municipalities and Cleveland. According to the agreement, the parklands must be devoted exclusively to park purposes and must be open to the public.

The area around Horseshoe Lake was developed in the 1930s and 1940s with ornamental planting and facilities for strolling, swimming, boating, and picnicking. Throughout its history, Horseshoe Lake Park has played an important role as a place for relaxation, family and community activities, and enjoyment of nature. However, in recent years, use of the park has declined as its facilities have aged. This Master Plan charts a course for the revitalization of Horseshoe Lake Park, based on significant input from the public, as a vibrant and beautiful community resource once again. Included in the following pages are a vision for the development of Horseshoe Lake Park, an analysis of the characteristics of the site and its context, and a walk-through of the Park as it would be in the future.

THE VISION FOR HORSESHOE LAKE PARK

The Master Plan was developed with the participation of local citizens. The City of Shaker Heights conducted two public meetings over the course of the Master Plan development to solicit input on what should happen at Horseshoe Lake Park. At the same time that the Master Plan was taking shape, Shaker Heights conducted a Recreation and Leisure Assessment that outlined objectives for development of recreation facilities throughout the City. A clear community vision for Horseshoe Lake Park emerged from these discussions:

- 1) The Park should remain a place for passive recreation activities such as walking and picnicking.
- 2) The Park should have places for community events and outdoor performances to bring people back to the park.
- 3) Trail connections between Horseshoe Lake Park and the other Shaker Lakes Parks should be developed.
- 4) The Park should continue to facilitate family gatherings.
- 5) Water should be a key part of the Horseshoe Lake experience, including views to the Lake, places to get down to the water, and perhaps boating.
- 6) Horseshoe Lake Park could be a setting for public art or sculpture.
- 7) There should be facilities and activities for people of all ages, including natural play areas for children of various age groups and places for seniors.

HORSESHOE LAKE PARK: THE SITE AND ITS CONTEXT

The Park's Surroundings

Horseshoe Lake Park is located on the border between Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights, with part of the park in each city. North Park Boulevard forms the northern boundary of the park, while South Park Boulevard is the southern boundary. The park stretches west from Park Drive all the way to Lee Road; however, this Master Plan deals only with the area of the park east of the dam. Historically the facilities have been maintained by Shaker Heights, with the exception of the paths on the Cleveland Heights side. The park is for the most part surrounded by private residences, although there is a private girls' school to the north whose students sometimes use the park for activities. Less than a mile to the west is the Shaker Nature Center, which runs environmental education activities and programs on its grounds near Lower Lake. Although Horseshoe Lake Park is adjacent to green space to the east and west, following Doan Brook, there is no pedestrian connection linking these public lands.

Water and Topography

Horseshoe Lake is the reason for being for the Park, and thus the condition of the lake and its tributaries and wetlands is very important. The Shaker inhabitants of this area dammed the confluence of two branches of Doan Brook at this location, using hydropower to run a textile mill and forming Horseshoe Lake. Stormwater runoff from the surrounding watershed, which is almost completely developed, brings nutrients, pollutants, and sediment into the lake. According to a study done by the Doan Brook Watershed Association, the water quality is remarkably good for a lake fed by urban runoff. However, the lake is filling in with sediment and becoming more like a wetland. In the 1940s, the lake was twenty-five feet deep; at the time of this writing it is six feet deep at its deepest part. Wetlands where the two branches of Doan Brook flow into the lake have enlarged over time. These wetlands are valuable in trapping sediment, filtering water that enters the lake and providing habitat. However, if the lake is to continue to be used for activities such as fishing and boating, it will need to be dredged and its bottom stabilized sometime in the future.

Horseshoe Lake occupies a relatively low spot in the topography, with steep banks surrounding the lake in most locations. The steepest and highest slopes are on the Cleveland Heights side of the lake. The edges of the peninsula where the main park facilities are slope steeply down to the water's edge and to the wetlands on either side.

Views and Vegetation

The shape and location of Horseshoe Lake presents many opportunities for views of the water from locations inside and outside the Park. One of the best views in the park is from the top of the dam, looking back toward the peninsula. In summer, trees and shrubs

along the edge of the peninsula hide the stonework and buildings at Horseshoe Lake Park, but in the winter they are fully visible. It is possible to see the lake from several places along South Park Boulevard, but it is nearly invisible from the Cleveland Heights side of the park.

Unfortunately, the edges of the lake have in recent years grown up with invasive shrub species such as Asiatic honeysuckles (*Lonicera spp.*) and European buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*, *Rhamnus frangula*). These tall shrubs have nearly completely hidden the lake except in places where openings have been maintained through foot traffic. In addition, some of the ornamental plantings within the park have also become overgrown to the point of shielding views. Historically, the park edges were much more open. Selective clearing of brush in certain areas and replanting of shorter wetland and shrub species can open up views to the water while maintaining a vegetative buffer at the edge of the lake to filter runoff from surrounding areas. No large trees should be removed unless they are in serious decline already and pose a hazard to park visitors.

Some of the most beautiful and unique elements of Horseshoe Lake Park are the beautiful oak trees that line the surrounding drives and are present within the park. Especially impressive is the grove of oaks at the entrance to the park peninsula, all of which are very tall and straight with branching that starts far up their trunks. This grove is very special, with a cathedral-like feeling, and should be preserved, remaining a place for informal picnicking and strolling through the trees. There are also many small flowering trees throughout the park, most of which were planted by garden clubs in the past. A memorial grove of flowering cherries, magnolias, and crabapples located on South Park Boulevard should be preserved, with pruning as necessary to keep the grove healthy. Some of the small flowering trees elsewhere in the park, particularly the crabapples, are nearing the end of their lifespan. A grove of nut trees, planted to represent a source of food valued by the Shakers, exists on the south side of the lake. The tip of the peninsula is home to a grove of pines, one of the only evergreen plantings at Horseshoe Lake Park.

In the 1930s, the Shaker Lakes were recognized as important habitat for migrating waterfowl, and water plants that ducks eat were planted along the lakeshore. Now, a particular type of waterfowl, the Canada goose, is considered a nuisance because of the effect of its droppings on lake water quality. A study on water quality conducted by Davey Resource Group, Inc. recommends planting taller shoreline vegetation such as wetland plants and shrubs, and establishing “no mow” areas along the lake to deter geese from entering the lake or grazing on its shores. These planting efforts should be coordinated with selective clearing so that views are maintained in certain areas and not obscured by tall shrubs.

Circulation and Wayfinding

Circulation, or the way people and cars move through a place, is a critical aspect of the recreational value of parks and how well they are used. Many current users of Horseshoe Lake Park go there to walk, birdwatch, or walk dogs, using the existing sidewalks and trails. However, this trail network could be simplified and enlarged.

Currently, visitors arriving by car drive along South Park Boulevard or North Park Boulevard, both wide and tree-lined drives, and then turn on Park Drive, on which the Park's entrance is located. A sign at the intersection of South Park Boulevard and Park Drive has the name of the park but it is hard to see. Another triangle intersection allows cars to enter the park peninsula from Park Drive. Chain link gates here are closed and locked when the park is not open, but people generally park along the entrance drives anyway. A commemorative rose garden at the center of the triangle is not doing well, probably because it is in too shady of a spot. A grander entrance would convey the historic character of the park more successfully and more effectively lead first time visitors to the park entrance. Having a single entrance rather than two entrance lanes will simplify this intersection and improve safety.

When the park gates are open, an asphalt driveway leads to a circle drive at the tip of the peninsula. Shrubs and trees here block views of the lake, although it is less than two hundred feet away. A gravel parking lot accommodates approximately fifteen cars. Dumpsters and a storage shed are located nearby. This entrance experience could be improved by opening up views to the lake, providing a focal point at the end of the drive, and screening service facilities.

Participants in the 2004 Recreation and Leisure study for Shaker Heights ranked trail connections among the Shaker Lakes as one of the most important tasks to achieve in the short term. Currently, Horseshoe Lake Park is not well connected to adjacent parkland. There are no paved paths in the park on the Shaker Heights side, although there is a sidewalk on the opposite side of South Park Boulevard. In the future, the parks in Shaker Heights should be connected by a hard surface trail wide enough for a variety of users, including walkers, joggers, bicyclists, people using wheelchairs, and perhaps inline skaters.

A desire to walk along the edge of the lake is evidenced by the worn dirt tracks created by visitors. These "herd paths" weave in and out of the woods throughout Horseshoe Lake Park and often go down to the water's edge. They were not planned but simply emerged from people going where they wanted to go. Because they were not planned they often have poor drainage or go down slopes at too steep a grade. The result is wet and eroded trails that harm tree roots and contribute sediment to the lake. A new path that circles the lake will be designed to provide a coherent experience, with views to the lake and a variety of scenery, with appropriate drainage and slopes that are easy to navigate. Existing paths that do not meet these objectives can be closed and revegetated.

To provide a variety of routes and experiences, Horseshoe Lake Park should be connected to other parks in the Shaker Lakes system; it should have an outer loop that encircles the lake, and it should have an inner loop through the peninsula. Side trails, such as special lake overlooks or a wetland boardwalk, will add to the richness of experiences available at the park.

The Peninsula – Current Uses

As the park is currently used, it can be thought of as being composed of three zones – the Historic Zone, the Play Zone, and the Picnic Zone. The Historic Zone includes two structures with beautiful stonework. One is the “beach” - a grand series of steps leading down to a sandy area at the lake’s edge; the other is a former wading pool at the tip of the peninsula. The character of these structures takes you back to the days when families came to Horseshoe Lake Park to play in the water. A fishing dock located on the north side of the peninsula is well used by kids who skip stones, but is accessed only from a steep and eroding trail. Two docks used to be located here, but one was recently uprooted after a storm and floated down to the outfall of the lake before it was removed.

Next to the Historic Zone is the parking area. Though functional, it isolates the historic area from the rest of the park and is a relatively bare place among the more exciting parts of the park. Moving the parking will allow the historic structures to become integrated with the other park attractions.

The Play Zone encompasses a section of the park that at one time offered a variety of sports and games activities for families. Two volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and a small play structure make this area a playground of sorts. Although a safety and code evaluation was not conducted as part of this Master Plan, it appears as though the equipment here is at the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. In addition, the play surface does not appear to meet National Playground Safety Standards.

The Picnic Zone has several facilities geared toward picnicking. A large shelter near the parking lot has enough tables to accommodate about 150 people. The shelter has a stone chimney and stone paving for the floor, but is in disrepair. Adjacent to the picnic pavilion is a relatively new restroom building, which serves its purpose very well but could be painted a more neutral color to blend in with the trees when the branches are bare. Spoil material from construction activities in the park was dumped down a slope next to the restrooms and has harmed the trees there.

As the facilities of Horseshoe Lake Park have aged, fewer picnics have occurred in the park. Today, one of the largest groups of users is people who walk their dogs in the park, many of whom let their dogs play off leash. While the City of Shaker Heights recognizes that it is important to have a place for dogs to run, use as a dog park is in conflict with the other desired uses and character of Horseshoe Lake Park as a place for community and family gatherings and passive recreation. The City plans to designate a different area in the Shaker Lakes Parkland for a dog park.

In general, Horseshoe Lake Park has tremendous potential as a center of community life and a place to enjoy the beauty of nature, with great assets in terms of its location, the lake, its large mature trees, and historic stonework. With a few improvements to circulation patterns and the replacement of some aging facilities, it will be an outstanding community resource.

HORSESHOE LAKE PARK: A DETAILED WALK-THROUGH

The Master Plan design for Horseshoe Lake Park brings together the park's best assets, connecting them to create a coherent and exciting experience of the park. It provides new facilities for community and family gatherings and places to enjoy views of the lake and get down to the water. It is designed to allow exploration of the diversity of environments at the park – the woodlands, wetlands, and open areas – in an environmentally sensitive way, and connects all these features together with a sensible and enjoyable trail network. The park will provide places that are attractive to visitors of diverse ages and abilities. It will be a cultural resource as well as a recreational resource, with places for informal enjoyment of the visual and performing arts.

Circulation and Trails

Horseshoe Lake Park is used by residents of both Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights, and by people arriving on foot or by car. Even more people will walk or bike to Horseshoe Lake Park when a connected trail system is in place. This hard-surface trail will be able to be used by people on foot, bicycle, using a wheelchair, or inline skating.

The outer loop trail runs along the existing paved paths along North Park Boulevard and across the dam, along South Park Boulevard, up Park Drive (dipping into the woods slightly where necessary to avoid the memorial oaks that line the road), and then connects with North Park Boulevard again. Visitors to the park will enjoy using the outer loop trail for exercise and enjoyment of nature, making Horseshoe Lake their destination or one stop along a longer route. An inner loop takes visitors to the heart of Horseshoe Lake park, circling the peninsula.

On the Shaker Heights side, pedestrians will enjoy a new trail that meanders through the space between South Park Boulevard and the lake. The trail passes near the grove of memorial cherry trees, dips down to the lake edge, and passes in and out of the edge of the woods. Pedestrians walk safely on the trail that follows Park Drive, a better alternative to walking on the road itself. This trail will be carefully designed and staked in the field before construction so that it avoids important trees. A new sign and ornamental planting under the existing oaks at the intersection of South Park Boulevard and Park Drive indicates clearly to newcomers where the park entrance lies.

Several side trails enrich the experiences available at Horseshoe Lake Park. Along North Park Boulevard on the Cleveland Heights side, two side trails venture to the edge of the slope, with overlooks to the lake. These side trails may be narrower and more rustic to create an experience distinct from the outer loop.

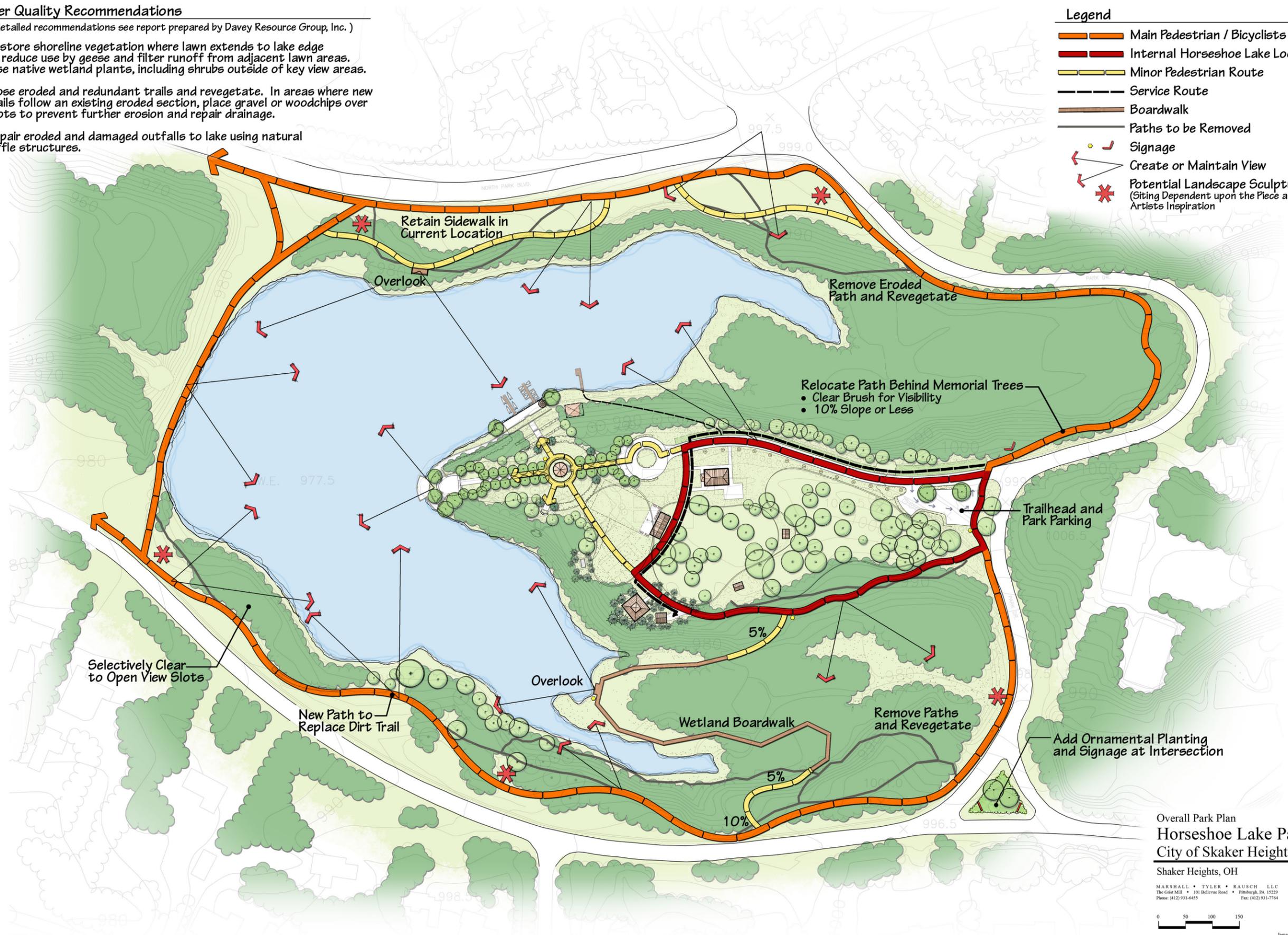
Water Quality Recommendations

(For detailed recommendations see report prepared by Davey Resource Group, Inc.)

- 1) Restore shoreline vegetation where lawn extends to lake edge to reduce use by geese and filter runoff from adjacent lawn areas. Use native wetland plants, including shrubs outside of key view areas.
- 2) Close eroded and redundant trails and revegetate. In areas where new trails follow an existing eroded section, place gravel or woodchips over roots to prevent further erosion and repair drainage.
- 3) Repair eroded and damaged outfalls to lake using natural riffle structures.

Legend

-  Main Pedestrian / Bicyclists Route - 8' Wide
-  Internal Horseshoe Lake Loop
-  Minor Pedestrian Route
-  Service Route
-  Boardwalk
-  Paths to be Removed
-  Signage
-  Create or Maintain View
-  Potential Landscape Sculpture (Siting Dependent upon the Piece and Artists Inspiration)



Overall Park Plan
Horseshoe Lake Park
 City of Skaker Heights

Shaker Heights, OH

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January 10, 2005



A wetland boardwalk connects the inner and outer trail loops on the Shaker Heights side, meandering through the marsh created at the mouth of Doan Brook. This lowland environment provides a completely different experience than the rest of the park, with tall cattails and reeds embracing the path on each side and the nearby sounds of aquatic and insect life. The wetland boardwalk will provide opportunities for birdwatching and environmental education as well as simple enjoyment of nature. An overlook at the midpoint of the boardwalk allows views back to the dam across the lake.

The Entrance Experience

The oaks that arch over Park Drive provide the perfect context for the entrance to Horseshoe Lake Park, allowing visitors to decompress and relax as they approach the park. The Y intersection that used to be the entrance to Horseshoe Lake Park will be reduced to a single curb cut, allowing safer entry and exit and providing room for a new parking lot. The paved lot accommodates 14 cars and may serve as the easternmost trailhead for the Shaker Lakes trail system. It replaces the old gravel lot within the park proper, which separated the historic area from the rest of the park. Construction and grading will be undertaken carefully to preserve the existing oak trees just south of the former entry drive, and new trees will be planted.

The entrance drive curves gently out of the trees, offering a glimpse of the lake in the distance. The grove of mature oaks to the right sets the tone for this elegant, peaceful park. Period light fixtures lining the drive recall the 1930s and 40s, when the park was established. Grass parking spaces, reinforced with a grid structure underneath for durability, flank the entrance drive on the right, with room for thirty-seven cars. Visitors coming can park at the entrance parking lot and walk in, or drop their family and picnic supplies off first, then park along the entrance drive or in the lot.

On the left side of the entrance drive, an elegant picnic pavilion comes into view. Reminiscent of the pavilions built in Cleveland parks in the 1930s, it incorporates native stone and arched openings. It identifies Horseshoe Lake Park as a place for family gatherings and as a park with history. Along with three smaller pavilions, this structure frames the Natural Play Area.

A formal circle drive forms the terminus of the entrance drive. Although large enough to accommodate fire trucks and emergency vehicles, special paving and planting makes it the gateway to the historic part of the park. The rose garden, formerly located at the entrance to the park, will find a new home here. The circle is aligned along an axis with the existing walkway to the former wading pool. This strong line leading to the tip of the peninsula will draw visitors to the heart of the historic area.

The Bandstand

A bandstand located where the walkways from the former wading pool and beach area meet is a natural focal point and destination at the end of the entrance drive, creating a sense of excitement about the experiences to come. This is the “community” heart of Horseshoe Lake Park, the location for performances and events in the park. It is a



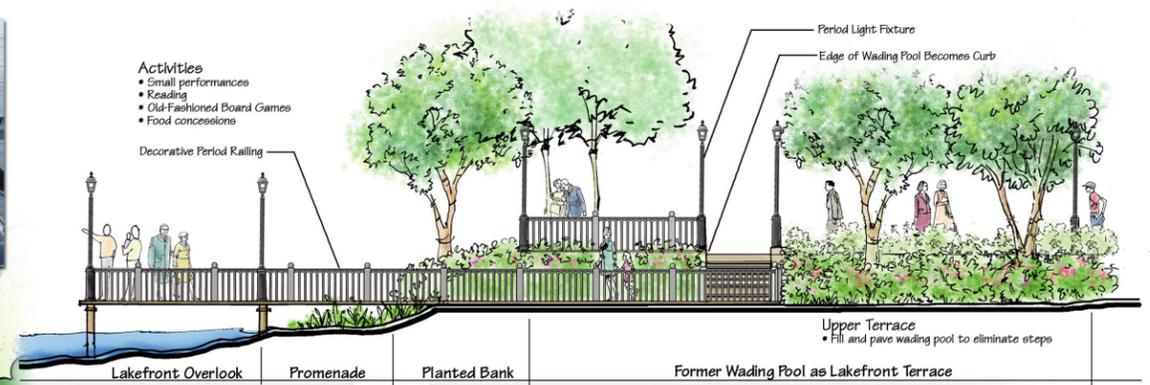
Picnic Pavilion Materials



Large Pavilion - Elevation
Scale: 3/16" = 1' - 0"



Fun on the Water



Lakefront Promenade - Elevation
Scale: 1/4" = 1' - 0"



Labyrinth



Themed Play Sculptures



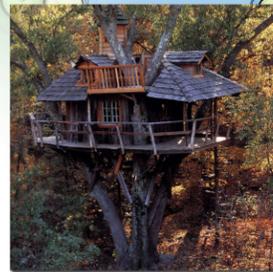
Play Structure



Digging Area



Woven Tunnels



Secret Treetop Overlook



Restroom Improvements



Environmental Education



Wetland Boardwalk

Master Plan
Horseshoe Lake Park
City of Shaker Heights

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beautiful structure in keeping with the architecture of the surrounding neighborhoods, with a shape that offers opportunities for theater in the round. People coming to Horseshoe Lake for a performance can sit on the lawn surrounding the bandstand and enjoy the show while picnicking. It is the kind of place that couples will visit to have their wedding photos taken.

Encircling the bandstand and the lawn is a border of flowering shrubs and perennials. Plants such as butterfly bush and bee balm will be chosen for their low-maintenance character and their appeal to butterflies.

An alleé of trees leads all the way from the formal circle drive to the former wading pool, leading visitors to the tip of the peninsula. The formal character of this double row of trees is in keeping with the axis created by the paths existing in the park in this location already. These trees will be chosen for their strong and graceful character and their hardiness and longevity. In the long term, these trees will replace the grove of pines that currently flanks the wading pool. Currently these pines are mature, and as they are of a relatively short-lived species, the alleé can be planted after the pines are deemed to be in decline and are ready to be removed.

The Lakefront Terrace, Boating Terrace & Promenade

The stone structures that were built at Horseshoe Lake Park, the former wading pool and beach area, hint at its past character and its role as a family waterfront gathering place. As designed in the Master Plan, they will be restored in a way that will revive their early twentieth century character, while adapting them for twenty-first century recreation. Restoration of the historic stone structures at the tip of the peninsula is key to the overall restoration of Horseshoe Lake Park, providing places for community gathering and giving visitors much needed opportunities to get close to the water.

In its new incarnation, the former wading pool will become a Lakefront Terrace. To make it accessible for people using a wheelchair, it will be filled and paved so that it is on the same level as the walk that leads to it. Flagstone paving to match the existing paving stones will be used throughout this historic area of Horseshoe Lake Park. Selective clearing at the wading pool will open up views to the lake, with certain trees left to frame the views and keep its wooded character. The terrace provides a second spot for outdoor performances and events besides the Bandstand, with moveable furniture and perhaps even food concessions on summer weekends. When there is not an event going on it is a place with a peaceful view out over the lake, a place perhaps for a pair of retired friends to stroll, have coffee, read a book, or play chess.

Steps leading down from the terrace will take visitors down the steep slope to the lake edge. A second Lakeshore Overlook at the water level will allow people to get close to the water and enjoy a different perspective of the park, without trampling its sensitive shoreline. Ornamental wetland plants could be planted here to create a lakeshore garden and discourage geese from using this spot. The Lakeshore Promenade leads around the tip of the peninsula to the former beach, which has been transformed into the Boating

Terrace. Flanked on one side with light posts in historic character, it is a charming and elegant strolling spot.

Once upon a time, swimming was a popular activity at Horseshoe Lake. Today, people are more likely to enjoy other water activities such as boating and canoeing, fishing, and birdwatching—not to mention skipping stones and all the other ways kids find to play around water. The Boating Terrace is one of several places specifically designed to allow people to get close to the water. Docks here can be used for boat concessions on busy summer weekends, or for catch and release fishing or water play at other times. An accessible ramp leads down the slope from the entry drive. The former beach area will be paved with flagstone to provide better footing than the sand that is currently there. Overgrown shrubs on the slope leading down to the Boating Terrace will be trimmed to open up views from the upper area and provide a grander approach.

The Secret Treetop Overlook

From the Bandstand area, a third path leads to the edge of the lake – or does it? A wide main path mirroring the angle of the path to the Boating Terrace appears to end at a low wall with a flower bed in front of it. However, narrower, curving paths lead around the obstacle to the Secret Treetop Overlook, a treehouse-like deck that extends out over the slope into the canopies of the trees. It is a completely different experience than the other two overlooks, with a smaller scale and more intimate feel. Benches here allow parkgoers a moment to relax and reflect, perched among the trees.

The Lawn

A fourth and final path from the Bandstand area leads to an informal gathering area, a large open lawn. This open space can be used for events and gatherings, or can be a place for dad and kids to throw a football. Its location in between the Bandstand and the picnic area gives it flexibility. It's a sunny spot that welcomes lounging and hanging out. One option it provides is the opportunity to have a temporary ice rink during the winter. An ice rink structure can be rented and placed right over the lawn when the grass is dormant, providing skating during the winter months. One of the picnic shelters could be used for ice skate concessions.

The Picnic Pavilions

Four new picnic pavilions will replace the large pavilion that now stands in the park. The new pavilions will be of several different sizes, to accommodate gatherings of various numbers of people. All will be elegant and traditional in style, although they may combine off-the-shelf designs with custom additions in order to reduce expenses. The largest pavilion, which seats 50-75 people, is located closest to the entrance drive. It has the most features, with a chimney and an outdoor barbecuing area. A medium-sized pavilion accommodates groups of up to 25 people and also could be expanded to make room for storage and ice skate or food concessions. The medium pavilion overlooks the Lawn and could also be used during inclement weather for events or performances there.

Two smaller pavilions are located closer to the woods and the Oak Grove and provide a more intimate and secluded experience for small groups and families. All four pavilions are close to the existing restroom building, which with a new coat of neutral-toned paint and screening will no longer have as prominent a presence in the park. A new toolshed built next to the restroom will be accessible by service vehicles and will provide storage for the equipment needed to maintain the park properly.

Natural Play

The four picnic pavilions surround the Natural Play Area. This is a wonderful and special play area for children combining traditional play structures with art- and plant-based play. It will encourage make-believe and informal play that kids develop on their own, using the natural materials around them like sticks, leaves, and logs to build make-believe “fairy houses,” and a “dig in the dirt” circle. Local artists and volunteers could be involved in building temporary tunnels and mazes out of willow saplings. A labyrinth mowed into the grass is a creative and inexpensive place to play and can change every year. More permanent installations could include traditional slides and swings and themed “play sculptures” that look like bugs or animals.

The Oak Grove

The stately grove of oaks that graces Horseshoe Lake Park at its entrance should be kept just like it is—the tall oaks, lawn underneath, and a few scattered picnic tables. There may be opportunities to use the grove in new ways, as a place not just for picnicking but also for display of environmental art. An opening in the trees could be the place for an old-fashioned council ring – a ring of stones or logs for storytelling. The beautiful trees of the grove should be examined on a regular basis by a licensed arborist and monitored for signs of disease or decline. A new generation of oaks can be planted in the gaps to replace the elder trees when they reach the end of their lives.

PHASING STRATEGIES

Construction of all the parts of the park is unlikely to happen all at once. Funding for various aspects will become available over time, especially as changes start to happen and momentum builds in the community. At the public meetings held to develop the program for the park, several priorities emerged that should be considered first for construction.

One of the things participants emphasized is the big difference small changes could make in the perception of the park. Some relatively inexpensive things could be done by the City of Shaker Heights (perhaps with assistance from Cleveland Heights, since many Cleveland Heights residents use the park) to make an immediate difference in the park's appearance. These include painting the restroom building, selective clearing of brush to open up views to the lake, and removal of unsafe or unsightly structures. The first task can easily be accomplished by City Public Works staff. The second task should be undertaken very carefully so that high value trees are not removed unintentionally. Key views to create are shown on the Overall Park Plan and the Master Plan drawings. A licensed arborist should walk the perimeter of the lake, preferably with the landscape architect, and flag those trees and shrubs to be removed. Clearing of invasive honeysuckle and buckthorn may be able to be done with the help of volunteers, but herbicides to prevent resprouting can only be applied by a professional with a pesticides license. Removal of unsafe or unsightly existing facilities, such as the existing picnic shelter and playground equipment, should be considered, provided a replacement can be built fairly soon thereafter. Materials such as the stone from the picnic shelter can be salvaged for reuse.

A second priority emerging from the public meetings was the construction of trails around Horseshoe Lake and beyond, connecting the park with the other Shaker Lakes Parks. Grant funding for trails is available and should be pursued. Construction of the improved trails will bring more people to the park and, if done well, will generate support for further improvements. Trails in the park interior (the inner loop) can be addressed at this time, too.

After these initial goals have been met, the next step is to create a new and exciting destination. Cleanup of the park and construction of the trails will have generated a certain momentum for further improvements. Construction of the Natural Play Area is a logical next step, both because it offers a lot of "bang for the buck," and because it can be built without altering existing facilities such as the entrance drive and parking. Replacement of the existing and apparently unsafe play equipment is a priority. Components of the Natural Play Area that can also be considered public art, such as a woven willow tunnel, might be candidates for grant funding. Volunteers and artists from the community might be enlisted to build playhouses or design a grass labyrinth.

The picnic pavilions should be built next, starting with the largest shelter. As the Natural Play area and pavilions take shape, the City will have replaced the worn out facilities it

already has while delivering a much higher quality and more innovative, unique environment. The structures could certainly be naming opportunities, or could be funded by a Friends of the Park group (see Appendix A). These historic-appearing structures will bring some of the elegance of the old-fashioned stonework into the picnic area, and tie the two areas together aesthetically.

Renovation of the entrance drive, parking, and historic area are long term goals. Development of these facilities will give the park new life, offering opportunities for public performances, community and neighborhood events, and water activities. However, the condition of the lake itself is relevant to this undertaking. If the lake is to continue to be used for activities such as fishing and boating, it will need to be dredged and its bottom stabilized sometime in the future.

MAINTENANCE

The improvements described above will be worthwhile only if they can be maintained. Park users expressed tremendous interest in improving the park at public meetings held during the Master Planning process. This civic energy can be harnessed to relieve some of the burden on the Public Works Department. For example, a Friends of Horseshoe Lake Park, if formed, could organize an annual “Clean Up the Park Day,” to clean up debris, mulch planting beds, trim shrubs, plant flowers, perhaps (with supervision) even paint structures. The Friends group could also become a source of publicity and funding for park improvements and events. The local Garden Club could maintain special plantings such as the Rose Garden. A group of volunteers could get involved with the Natural Play Area, building playhouses, mowing a grass labyrinth, etc. The local Boy Scout troop could help maintain the trails—possibilities are nearly endless, but will rely on the development of partnerships between the City of Shaker Heights and various community groups.

PRELIMINARY OPINION OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COST - DRAFT

Horseshoe Lake Park,
Shaker Heights, OH

Assumptions:
All costs estimated in 2004 dollars.

Items not included:
Selective clearing to open views (staff), invasive species removal, dredging lake, water quality treatment,
painting restroom (staff), Ice rink, including bringing three-phase power to the site

Item	Total Cost
TRAILS	\$ 530,000
PICNIC AREA & NATURAL PLAY	\$ 1,550,000
ENTRANCE AND PARKING	\$ 460,000
HISTORIC AREA	\$ 1,740,000
TOTAL	\$ 4,280,000

APPENDIX A – NONPROFIT PARK ORGANIZATIONS

Prepared by MTR
October 5, 2004

Why are Parks Conservancies/ Friends Groups established?

Parks organizations are most often established when a public parks agency is unable to fund or manage park improvements, planning, programs, and/or maintenance on its own, for whatever reason.

What do they do?

Parks nonprofits do everything that public park agencies do, and more. They can:

- Raise funds from members, foundations, corporations, etc. – all traditional sources of charitable giving.
- Hold events, exhibits, performances, festivals, etc.
- Run programs (i.e. the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy’s Walk in the Woods and lunchtime lecture series, or a children’s summer daycamp)
- Initiate, fund, and run master planning efforts.
- Provide maintenance for parks (often funded partially or fully by the parks department on a contract basis)
- Work with other nonprofits (for example, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy works with Venture Outdoors to provide outdoor activities).
- Run concessions in parks
- Write and receive grant funding or provide matching funds for grants.
- Advocate for park constituents to public parks departments.
- Initiate and fund capital improvements.

What can’t a parks nonprofit do?

- Levy taxes to fund projects.
- Operate for profit.

How do they work with public parks departments?

Degrees of partnership with public agencies vary greatly, according to an article by the Project for Public Spaces, a national nonprofit.¹ They may range from organizations that only fundraise, promote certain projects, or hold events, to those that are responsible for much more, including part or all of park maintenance. Capital improvements may be initiated by parks nonprofits, but because of the liability and oversight required during construction, capital projects are often run by the public parks department.

¹ “a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities. We provide technical assistance, education, and research through programs in parks, plazas and central squares; buildings and civic architecture; transportation; and public markets.” www.pps.org

The Central Park Conservancy's relationship with the City of New York is one model of public-nonprofit partnership. The Conservancy provides all the maintenance and programming for Central Park under a management contract with the NYC Parks Department. The Conservancy receives an annual fee for services determined by a formula that requires them to raise and spend a specified minimum amount of private funds in the Park on an annual basis (so that they do not become solely a maintenance organization). However, the City retains control and policy responsibility for the Park. Capital improvements for the park continue to undergo public review. All events are reviewed by the Parks department. All revenues generated from concessions go to the City. The two organizations are strongly intertwined, as the Conservancy's 60-member Board of Trustees includes the Parks Commissioner and the Borough President of Manhattan.

How do they fund capital projects?

Capital projects involving a nonprofit can be funded with private and public dollars. Public dollars are often needed for large improvements.

How do they fund operations? What is the size of a typical annual budget?

Operations must be funded through donations, grants, and earned income, as with any nonprofit.

According to the Project for Public Spaces, annual budgets among parks nonprofits range from small (\$1,700 - \$45,000) to medium (\$100,000 - \$450,000) to large (\$1 - \$23 million).

Where have they been done?

The Central Park Conservancy, New York City, NY, 212-310-6600,
www.centralparknyc.org

Battery Park City Conservancy, New York City, NY, info@bpcparks.org

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Pittsburgh, PA, 412-682-7275, www.pittsburghparks.org

The Louisville Olmsted Park Conservancy, Louisville, KY,
<http://www.olmstedparks.org/>

The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, San Francisco, CA
www.parksconservancy.org,

The Piedmont Park Conservancy, Atlanta, GA, www.piedmontpark.org

Further Reading

Public Parks, Private Partners: How Partnerships are Revitalizing Urban Parks, by the Project for Public Spaces.