

Sponsor: Planning Commission
This is not a Revision to the Codified Ordinances

CITY OF AURORA
OHIO

ORDINANCE 2025-101

INTRODUCED BY: Dennis Kovach

SECONDED BY: John Seitz

AN ORDINANCE GRANTING A CONDITIONAL ZONING CERTIFICATE TO THE CITY OF AURORA FOR A PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITY, LOCATED AT 1100 SQUIRES ROAD, IN THE MIXED-USE DISTRICT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY TO KEEP THE GEAGA LAKE PROJECT ON SCHEDULE FOR THE PUBLIC TO ENJOY

WHEREAS, on June 4, 2025, the Planning, Zoning and Building Department received an application from the City of Aurora for a conditional zoning certificate for a public outdoor recreational facility, located at 1100 Squires Road, in the Mixed-Use District; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on June 18, 2025 by the Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission at its regular meeting of July 16, 2025, considered the factors which apply to the granting of a conditional zoning certificate for the use of property located at 1100 Squires Road to allow a public outdoor recreational facility, in the Mixed-Use District; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council for the City of Aurora, County of Portage, State of Ohio, that:

Section 1. The recommendation of the Planning Commission to grant the conditional zoning certificate to the City of Aurora for a public outdoor recreational facility located at 1100 Squires Road, Aurora, Ohio is hereby accepted.

Section 2. It is hereby found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the passage of this Ordinance were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and any of its Committees that resulted in such formal action were in meetings open to the public in compliance with the legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Section 3. This Ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety of this municipality and for the further reason keep the Geauga Lake project on schedule for the public to enjoy. Wherefore, provided it receives an affirmative vote of six or more of the members elected to this Council, this Ordinance shall take effect and be in force immediately upon

its passage by Council and approval of the Mayor; otherwise, it shall take effect and be in force after the earliest time provided by law.

adopted 8-0

Adopted: *July 21, 2025*

Approved: *July 22, 2025*

Effective: *July 22, 2025*

By: *Ann H. Womer Benjamin*
Ann Womer Benjamin, Mayor

Attest: *Marie Lawrie*
Marie Lawrie, Clerk of Council

Approved as to legal form by: _____
Dean DePiero, Director of Law

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

I, Marie Lawrie, do hereby certify that I am the duly appointed and acting Clerk of Council of the City of Aurora, Ohio, and that the foregoing Ordinance was published in the City of Aurora as required by law by posting a true and exact copy thereof at the six (6) public posting places as established by Ordinances 1976-10 and 1992-107 and amended by Ordinances 1998-76, 2000-74, and 2014-078.

- 1) City Hall
- 2) Heinen's Grocery Store, Barrington Town Square
- 3) Fire Station No. 2
- 4) Aurora Memorial Library
- 5) U.S. Post Office, Village Commons Shopping Center
- 6) City Website

Such posting was for a period of fifteen (15) days commencing on the *22* Day of

July, 2025.

Signed this *22* Day of *July*, 2025.

Marie Lawrie
Clerk of Council
City of Aurora

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT
Project: Public Outdoor Recreation Facility
 July 16, 2025 Meeting
 Staff: Denise Januska, AICP, City Planner

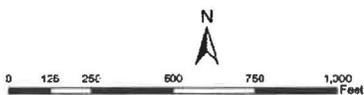
2025-101

Request: Conditional Zoning Certificate
File: 250612
Owner/Applicant: City of Aurora
Location: 1100 Squires Road
Current Zoning: Mixed-Use District
Lot Size: 40 acres

Introduction:

The City of Aurora is proposing to turn a portion of the former Sea World and Geauga Lake Park into a community park. There will be 5 phases of development with a beach area, swimming pool, walking trails and buildings for community use, just to name a few.

Existing Land Use and Zoning of Surrounding Property			
Project Site	Residential	M-1	Vacant
North	Residential		Bainbridge Township
East	Residential	M-1	Single-family
South	Residential	M-1	Single-family / Commercial
West	Residential	M-1	Geauga Lake / Commercial



Aurora Park at Geauga Lake
Zoning Map
June 2025
Aurora, OH

- Area of Interest
- City Boundary

2025-101

Staff Comments:

- A public hearing was held on June 18, 2025.
- A professional site plan for all improvements on the property shall be approved before construction.
- Section 1153.02 states the Planning Commission shall review each proposed use in terms of the following standards and may also impose additional conditions and safeguards deemed necessary for the general welfare and protection of individual property rights:
 - Is the use harmonious with and in accordance with the general objectives or with any specific objective of the Master Plan of current adoption; **The Master Plan designates the area as Mixed-Use zoning and includes an entertainment uses.**
 - Will the use be designed, constructed, operated and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such a use will not change the essential character of the same area; **The area is being proposed as a public park with lake access.**
 - The use will not be hazardous or disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses; **the use will not be hazardous to the area.**
 - The use will not be detrimental to property in the immediate vicinity or to the community as a whole; **The proposed use is an asset to the community as a whole.**
 - The use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as roads, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal or schools, or that the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the proposed use shall be able to provide adequately any such service; **Yes, studies are being conducted for all infrastructure improvements.**
 - All structures, roads and utilities, shall be in compliance with the City's Subdivision Regulations, the Board of Health standards and the Building Code; **All improvements will be built to current standards and regulations.**
 - The use will not create vehicular approaches to the property which shall be so designed as not to create an interference with traffic on surrounding public roads; and **Traffic studies are underway to evaluate vehicular approaches to the park.**
 - The use will not have exterior equipment which is incompatible with the uses of the district, including but not limited to the following:
 - Loudspeakers which cause a hazard or annoyance shall not be permitted, and **Events will be held but any noise or speakers will adhere to the city's noise ordinance.**
 - Lighting shall not constitute a nuisance and shall in no way impair safe movement of traffic lighting on any street or highway. **Lighting is being done and will follow all city requirements.**

- Section 1153.03(d) states additional standards that shall apply to public outdoor recreation facilities:
 - All structures, parking, loading, storage, play and recreation areas, and other uses shall be located at least one hundred (100) feet from all property lines, unless otherwise approved in the conditional zoning certificate; **The conceptual plan shows most activities and structures 100 feet from property lines. Activities and structures will not be any closer than what is shown on the conceptual plan.**
 - Loudspeakers which cause a hazard or annoyance shall not be permitted; **Noise will be regulated under the city's noise ordinance.**
 - Unless otherwise approved in the conditional zoning certificate, no curb cut shall be located closer to a road intersection than two hundred (200) feet; and **No intersection is within 200 feet.**
 - All permitted installations shall be maintained in a neat, orderly condition so as to prevent injury to any single property and individual or to the community in general. **The City of Aurora will be maintaining the park for community and public use.**

Staff recommend a positive recommendation for a public recreation area conditional zoning certificate to be forwarded to City Council.





CITY OF AURORA
Aurora Park
VISION PLAN

2025-101



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Agenda

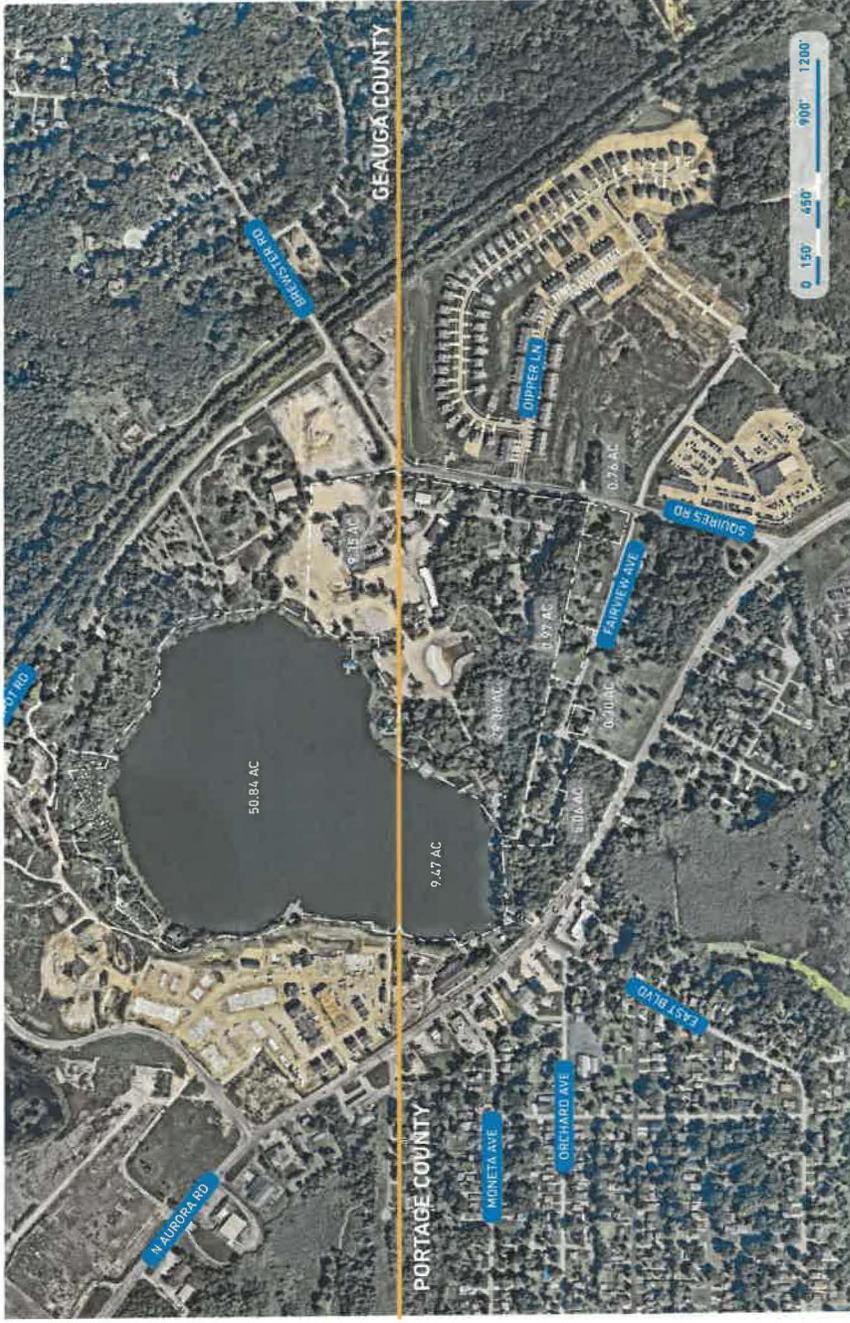
- **Project Background**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Existing Conditions / Evaluations**
- **Aurora Park Vision**
- **Implementation**



Background

Project Location

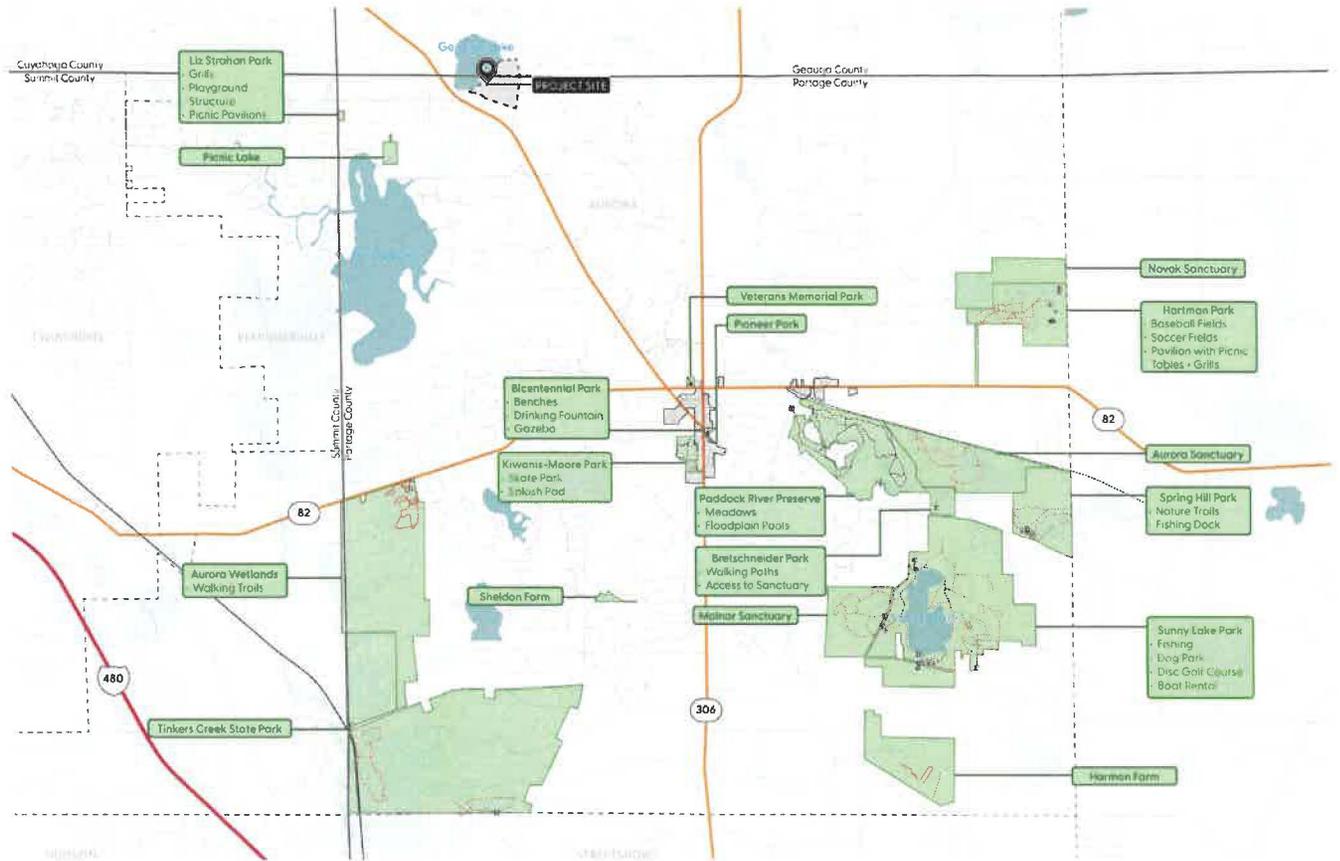
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Background

Project Location

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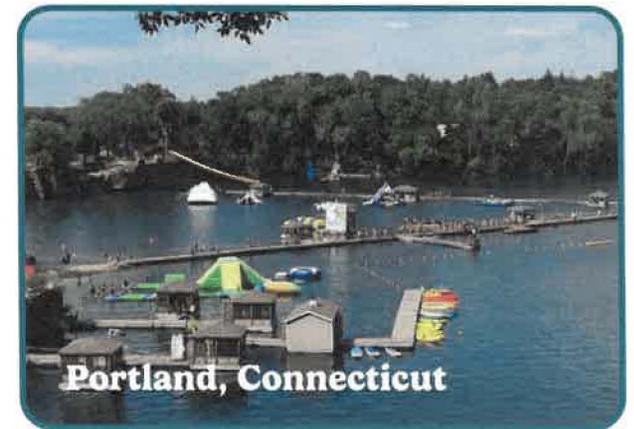
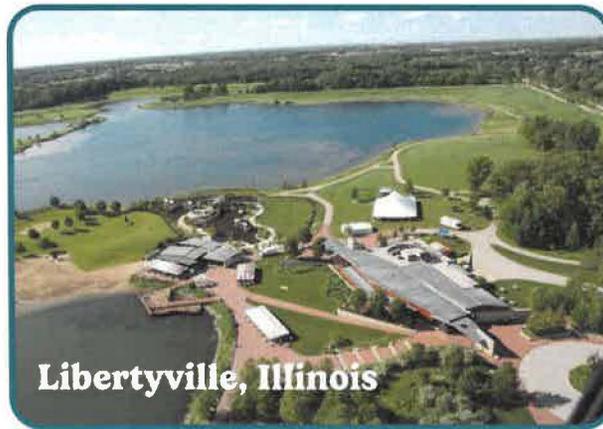


Background

Park Benchmarks

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Early analysis included a review of regional and national benchmarks to identify the characteristics of a premier community park in the Midwest. These parks typically feature core activities such as canoeing or swimming, a variety of water-based recreational options, unique attractions, family- and community-focused events, as well as educational and seasonal programming.



Background

Local Benchmarks

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After evaluating market data related to park visitation, usage, and recreational spending, it was determined that Aurora Park is well positioned to fill a market gap by offering all five benchmark activities associated with a successful community park.



Core Activities



Water-based Recreation



Unique Attractions



Family + Community Focus

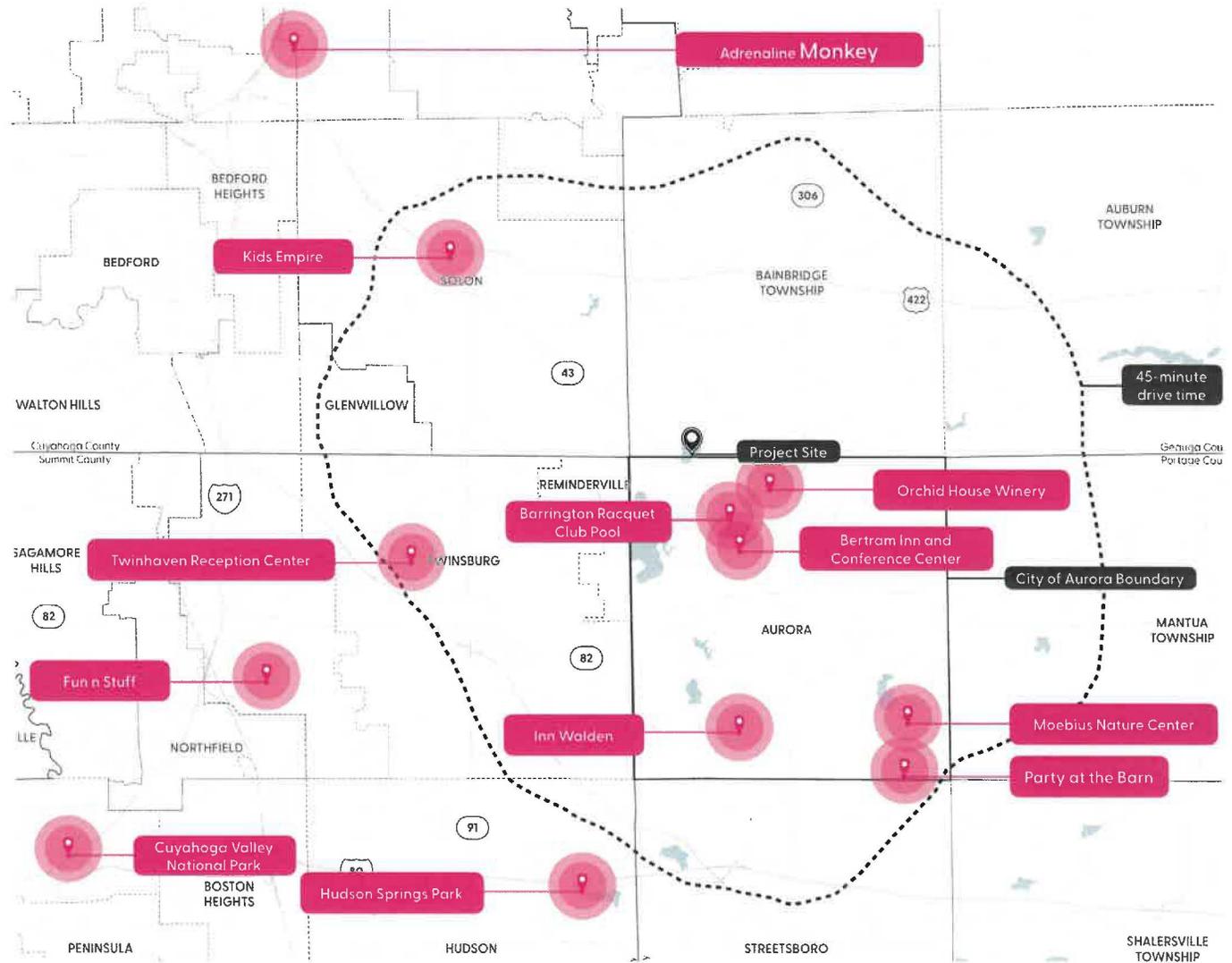


Education + Seasonal Opportunities

Background

Program Analysis: Adjacent + Indirect Service Providers

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Service providers include adventure play, outdoor experiences, nature programs, rentable space, dining, aquatics, trails, and hiking with adjacency to the site to understand the surrounding offerings.

Background

Program Analysis

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Gaps + Opportunities

- Limited Diversity in Outdoor Adventure Play
- Water-Based Activities
- Small-Scale Event Spaces
- Specialized Indoor/Outdoor Hybrid Spaces
- Limited Educational Programming
- Underutilization of Natural Assets
- Accessibility and Inclusivity
- Seasonal Programming

Market Differentiation

- Introduce unique experiences
- Offer water-based recreation like paddleboarding and kayaking
- Develop themed adventure play zones or nature trails with immersive elements
- Create flexible indoor/outdoor venues
- Launch educational programs
- Design for inclusivity
- Collaborate with local non-profits
- Highlight conservation efforts and offer educational programs
- Partner with regional wineries, breweries, and food producers to host curated experiences
- Leverage the historical significance of Geauga Lake
- Brand the park as a place for relaxation, adventure, and connection with nature

Engagement Overview

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Engagement

Key Takeaways



The history of the site is important to residents



Safety is an important aspect of the project for the community



Residents would like to leverage the natural features at Aurora Park and scenic beauty of Geauga Lake



Residents would like to see walking trails along the lake and throughout the park



Water access is important to residents, especially options for swimming, along with adventure play and nature-based education



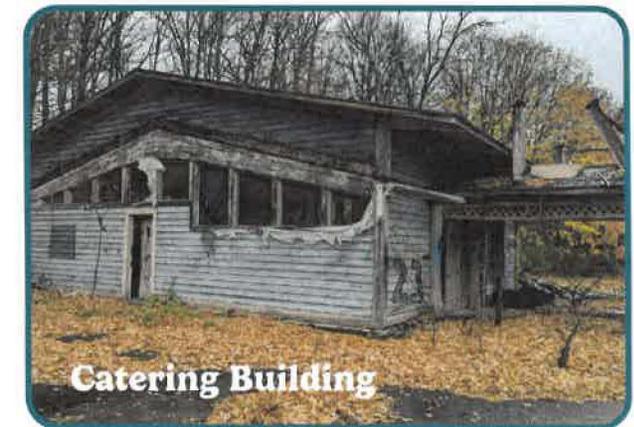
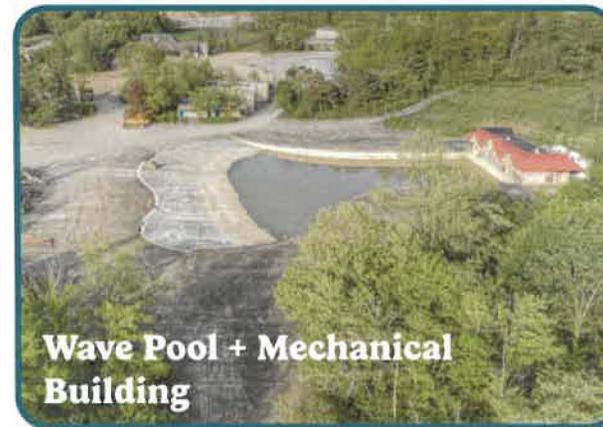
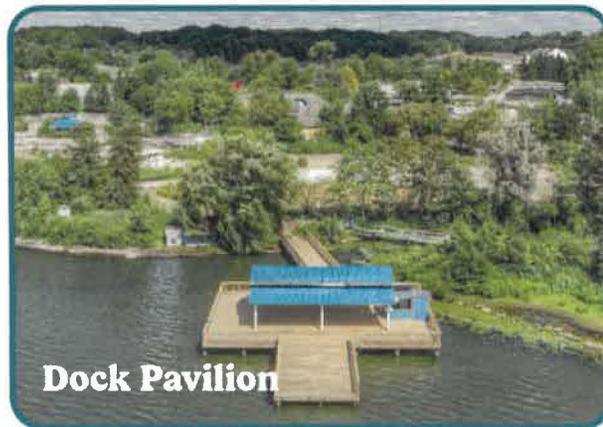
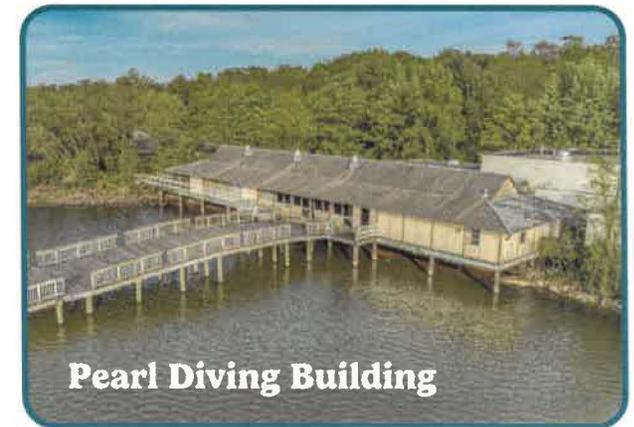
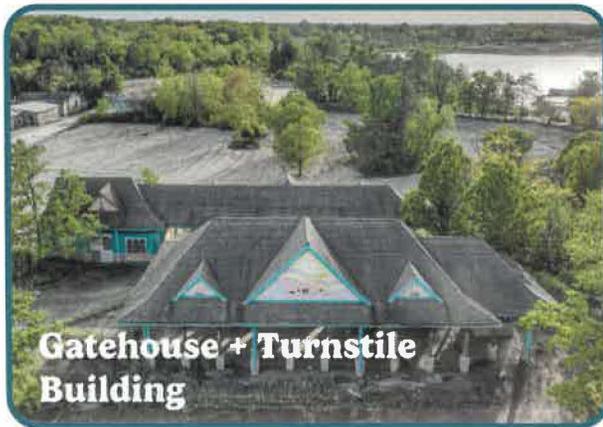
Amenities, events, food, and entertainment options are also desired to make Aurora Park an all-day destination

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Existing Conditions

Existing Buildings on Site

As part of the existing conditions analysis, the existing buildings on site underwent visual assessment by a structural engineer, and in some cases, underwater inspections by a dive team to evaluate the condition of pier support structures. These evaluations helped determine which structures and features are viable for reuse, rehabilitation, or adaptation—and which may require full reconstruction.



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Study Area

Opportunities & Challenges

Opportunities

- RICH SITE HISTORY AND NOSTALGIA
- CAPITALIZING ON THE LAKEFRONT AND NATURAL AREAS
- POSITIONED TO BE A FANTASTIC COMMUNITY ASSET
- REUSE OF EXISTING STRUCTURES FOR PARK AMENITIES
- CONNECTIONS TO NEW DEVELOPMENTS
- FUTURE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL WITH TRAIL CONNECTIONS
- ECONOMIC + EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY



Challenges

- HIGH COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH RETROFITS OF DETERIORATING/ DILAPIDATED BUILDINGS
- POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS
- POTENTIAL CONGESTION ON SQUIRES ROAD
- ACCESS AND TRAFFIC FLOW INTO THE SITE
- LIMITED AVAILABILITY OF REUSABLE UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE
- MAGNITUDE OF SITE AND SCALE OF VISION REQUIRES THOUGHTFUL PROJECT PHASING

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Vision Overview



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Vision

Concept Plan



- LAKESHORE GATHERING GROUNDS
- POOLSIDE FUN
- WOODLAND ADVENTURE
- COMMUNITY PARK

Vision

Lakeshore Gathering Grounds

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A KAYAK LAUNCH



B SUNDECK



C ADVENTURE NATURE PLAYGROUND



D GREAT LAWN



E GATEHOUSE PLAZA



F WELCOME CENTER



Vision

Lakeshore Gathering Grounds

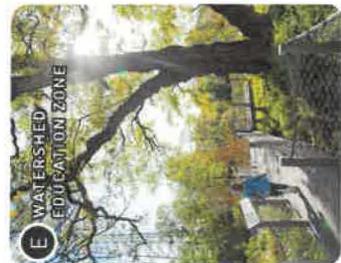
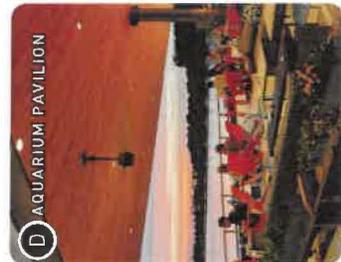
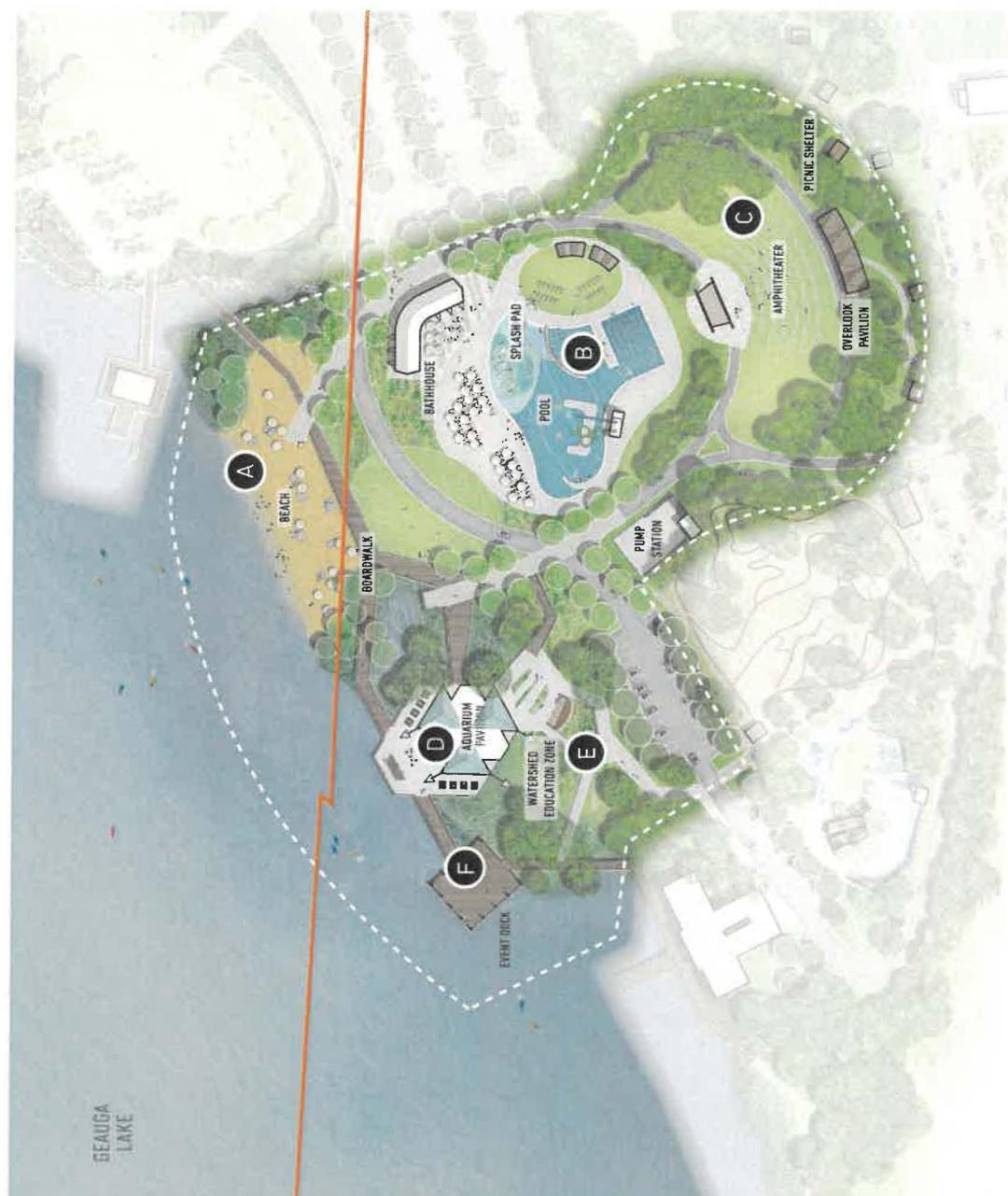
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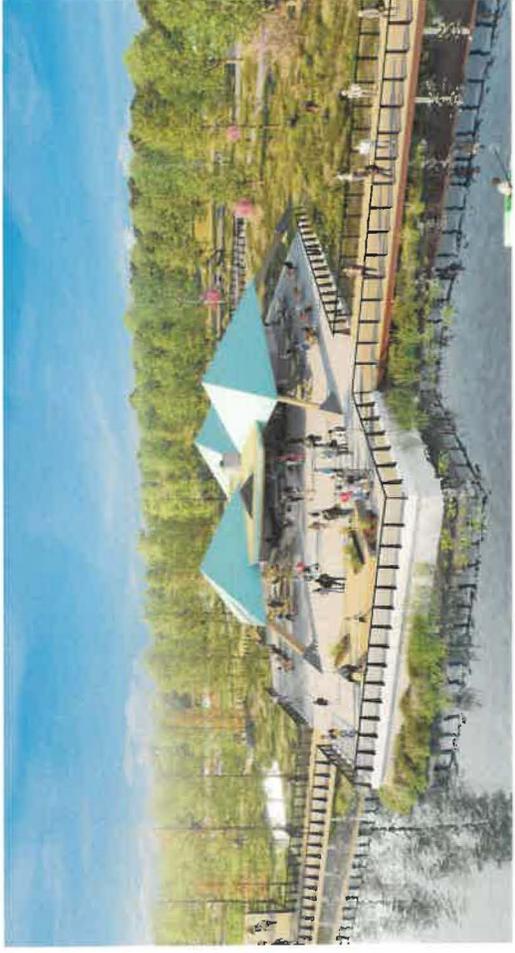
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Poolside Fun



Vision
Poolside Fun

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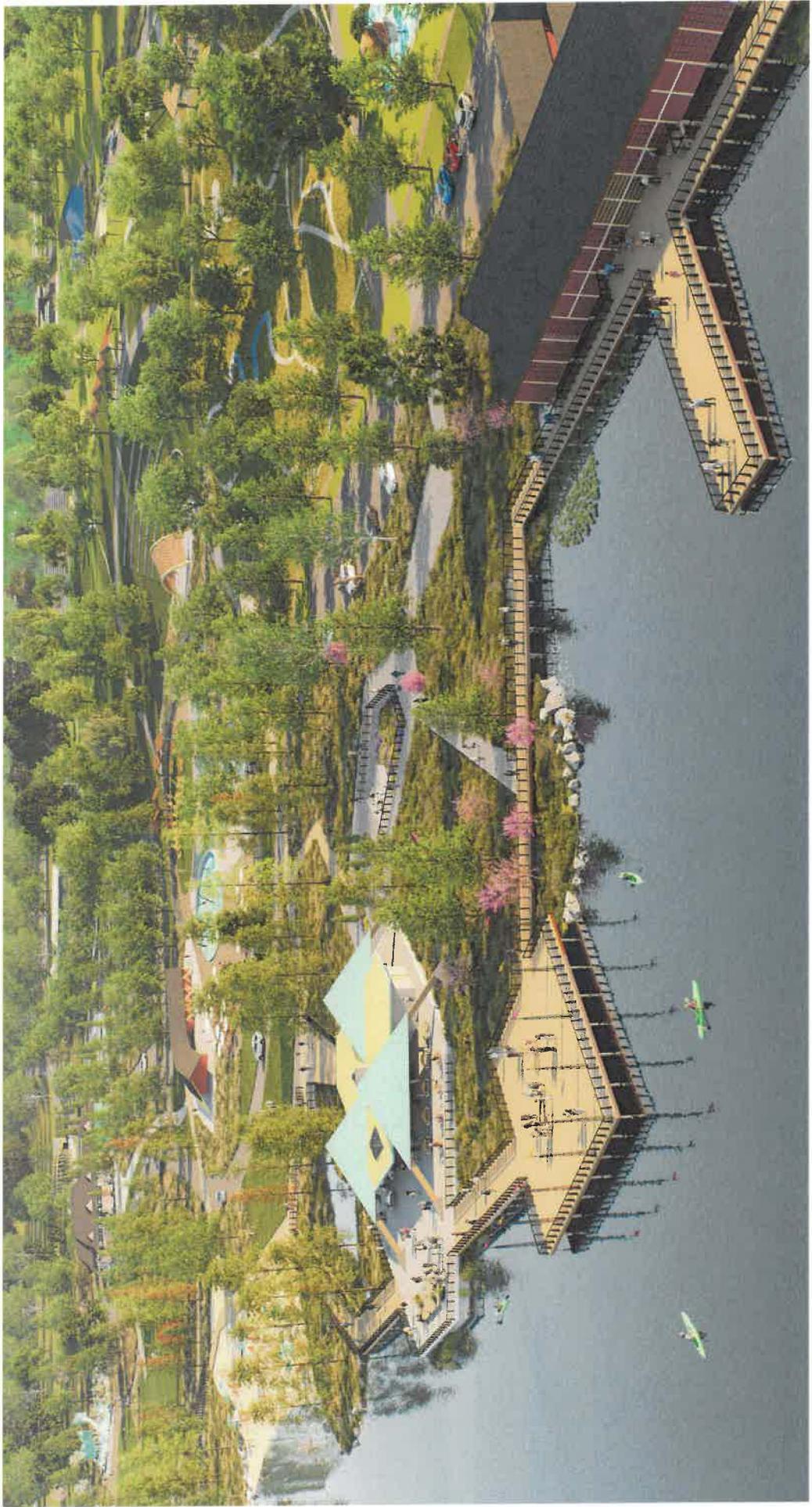
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Vision Woodland Adventure



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Vision
Woodland Adventure



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Vision Community Park



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Action Plan

Project Phasing

PHASE 1A

- A** GATEHOUSE + TURNSTILE REHABILITATION
- B** LAKEFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

PHASE 1B

- C** ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND
- D** EXPANDED PARKING

PHASE 2

- E** POOL
- F** BEACH
- G** AQUARIUM PAVILION
- H** AMPHITHEATER



Project Area 1

Project Area 2

Project Area 4

Project Area 3

Action Plan

Implementation

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PHASE	APPROXIMATE AREA	PROJECT SUMMARY	ANTICIPATED COMPLETION
 <p>1</p>	13.8 ACRES	SITE PREPARATION AND DEMOLITION. GATEHOUSE, TURNSTILE, AND LAKE DOCK RENOVATION AND ASSOCIATED AMENITIES. KAYAK LAUNCH, BOAT RAMP, ADVENTURE PLAY AREA AND ASSOCIATED AMENITIES. UTILITY UPGRADES. PLAZA, PARKING, AND PARK ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE.	1A: 2026 1B: 2027
 <p>2</p>	8.8 ACRES	SITE PREPARATION AND DEMOLITION. NEW AQUARIUM BUILDING, BATHHOUSE, AND AMPHITHEATER. POOL AND ASSOCIATED MECHANICS. BEACH, BOARDWALK AND NEW DOCK. UTILITY UPGRADES. WATERSHED EDUCATION AREA AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE. PARKING FEATURES.	TARGET: 2029
 <p>3</p>	6.48 ACRES	SITE PREPARATION AND DEMOLITION. OVERLOOK PAVILION AND OTHER PARK SHELTERS. MEETING BUILDING RENOVATION. RECREATIONAL PARK FEATURES INCLUDING COURTS AND FIELDS AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE. UTILITY UPGRADES. PARKING FEATURES.	FUTURE PHASE
 <p>4</p>	5.85 ACRES	SITE PREPARATION AND DEMOLITION. PEARL DIVING BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED AMENITIES. MOUNTAIN BIKING PAVILION AND COURSE, ROCK CLIMBING PAVILION AND FEATURES. UTILITY UPGRADES. PARKING FEATURES.	FUTURE PHASE

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