



**AMENDED**

**AGENDA**

CITY OF STURGEON BAY

BRADLEY LAKE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 8th, 2023

Council Chambers, City Hall, 421 Michigan Street

5:00 P.M.

1. Roll Call.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. General Introductions.
4. Wisconsin Open Meeting Law, presentation by City Administrator Josh VanLieshout.
5. Discussion of Common Council's charge to the Committee, led by Josh VanLieshout.
6. Sunset Master Plan, presentation Municipal Services Director Mike Barker.
7. Adjourn.

**NOTE: DEVIATION FROM THE AGENDA ORDER SHOWN MAY OCCUR**

Notice is hereby given that a majority of the Common Council may be present at this meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility. If a quorum of the Common Council does attend, this may constitute a meeting of the Common Council and is noticed as such, although the Common Council will not take any formal action at this meeting.

Notice is hereby given that if a quorum of one of the committees is not present, the committee with a quorum may meet and act upon the agenda subjects.

Bradley Lake Ad Hoc Committee members:

Co-chairs:

Gary Nault, Helen Bacon

Joshua VanLieshout

Mike Barker

Chad Shefchik

Nicholas Haus

Nicholas Lutzke

Skyler Witalison

Peter Hurth

Posted  
12:00PM  
03.06.23  
SM



## Understanding and Complying With Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law

Claire Silverman, Legal Counsel, League of Wisconsin Municipalities

*Author's Note:* This is Part 1 of a 2-part legal comment providing an overview of Wisconsin's open meetings law requirements. Part 2 will appear in the July issue.

Members of local governmental bodies need to understand Wisconsin's open meetings law requirements. This month's legal comment provides an overview of the law.

The open meetings law is found in §§ 19.81 through 19.98 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The law does not require absolute openness. However, the legislature has declared that the "public is entitled to the fullest and most complete information regarding the affairs of government as is compatible with the conduct of governmental business."<sup>1</sup> To that end, the law requires that all meetings of governmental bodies be preceded by public notice, be held in places reasonably accessible to the public, and be open to all citizens except as otherwise specifically provided.<sup>2</sup> Governmental bodies may meet in closed session if the subject matter comes within one of a set number of exemptions set forth in the law.<sup>3</sup>

### Definitions Are Key to Understanding Law

The open meetings law only applies to meetings of a "governmental body" as defined by Wis. Stat. § 19.82(1). This definition, together with the definition of "meeting" in § 19.82(2), is the key to understanding when the open meetings law applies. A "governmental body" includes a "local agency, board, commission, committee, council, department or public body corporate and politic created by constitution, statute, ordinance, rule or order," as well as "formally constituted" subunits of any of these bodies. Quasi-governmental bodies are also subject to the open meetings law.<sup>4</sup> For open meetings law purposes, a governmental body must have (1) a defined membership; (2) collective responsibilities, authority, power, and duties vested in the body as a whole, distinct from the individual members; and (3) must be created by constitution, statute, ordinance, rule or order. "Rule" includes any authoritative, prescribed direction for conduct, such as the regulations governing procedure in a governmental body.<sup>5</sup>

Bodies formed for or meeting for the purpose of collective bargaining are specifically excluded from the definition of "governmental body."<sup>6</sup>

"Meeting" is defined as the convening of members of a governmental body for the purpose of exercising the responsibilities vested in that body. A meeting does not include social or chance gatherings that are not intended to avoid the law. When one-half or more of the members of a governmental body are present, a meeting is "rebuttably presumed" to be for official purposes.<sup>7</sup>

Another important term, "open session," is defined as a meeting "which is held in a place reasonably accessible to members of the public and open to all citizens at all times."<sup>8</sup> The Wisconsin Supreme Court has interpreted this to mean "that a governmental body must meet in a facility which gives reasonable public access, not total access, and that it may not systematically exclude or arbitrarily refuse admittance to any individual."<sup>9</sup>

### When Is There a Meeting Subject to the Law?

Although application of the open meetings law is usually straightforward, local officials should be aware of some situations that can result in pitfalls for the unwary.

A two-prong test is used in determining whether a meeting occurs.<sup>10</sup> Both prongs must be met.

1. Wis. Stat. § 19.81(1).

2. Wis. Stat. §§ 19.81 and 19.83.

3. Exemptions are set forth under § 19.85.

4. A private entity is a "quasi-governmental corporation" within the meaning of the open meetings law if, based on the totality of circumstances, it resembles a governmental corporation in function, effect, or status. Key factors include but are not limited to: (1) the entity's finances; (2) whether the entity serves a public function; (3) whether it appears to the public to be a government entity; (4) whether the entity is subject to government control; and (5) the degree of access that government bodies have to the entity's records. No one factor is determinative, and determinations must be made on a case-by-case basis. *State of Wisconsin v. Beaver Dam Area Development Corporation*, 2008 WI 90.

5. *State ex rel. Krueger v. Appleton Area Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, 2017 WI 70, 376 Wis. 2d 239, 898 N.W.2d 35.

6. Wis. Stat. § 19.82(1).

7. Wis. Stat. § 19.82(2).

8. Wis. Stat. § 19.82(3).

9. *State ex rel. Badke v. Village Bd. of Greendale*, 173 Wis.2d 553, 580, 494 N.W.2d 408, 418 (1993).

10. *State ex rel. Newspapers, Inc. v. Showers*, 135 Wis.2d 77, 102, 398 N.W.2d 154, 165 (1987).

1. *Purpose*: There must be a purpose to engage in governmental business. This can be discussion, decision, or simply information gathering.

2. *Numbers*: The number of members present must be sufficient to determine the parent body's course of action regarding the proposal discussed.

Regarding the numbers prong, the potential of a gathering to determine the parent body's course of action concerning a proposal can be either the affirmative power to pass or the negative power to defeat. Thus, a gathering of less than one-half the members of a body may constitute a meeting if the number of members present constitutes a **"negative quorum"** (i.e., a sufficient number to block action by the body on a particular issue). This happened in the *Showers* case, where the two-prong test was first announced. Four out of 11 members met privately to discuss a budget matter. The court held that the meeting was illegal because four members constituted a negative quorum since they could determine the outcome by voting as a block against the budget change, which required a two-thirds majority vote.<sup>11</sup>

The same principle would seem to apply with regard to matters that can be passed by a vote based on the quorum rather than total membership, such as a majority or fraction of a quorum. In such cases, the minimum figure for triggering the open meetings law may be less if it is known that fewer members will attend a meeting. For example, if a village board has seven members and all attend a meeting, a matter requiring a majority vote may be blocked by four members.

But if it is known that only four members will attend, the matter may be blocked by two.

Local officials must also be aware of and avoid what is sometimes called a **"walking quorum."** A "walking quorum" is a series of gatherings among separate groups of members of a governmental body, each less than quorum size, who agree, tacitly or explicitly, to act uniformly in sufficient number to reach a quorum.<sup>12</sup> A series of gatherings, telephone calls, or e-mails between a small enough number of officers so as not to trigger the law at one specific gathering may constitute an illegal meeting.<sup>13</sup>

From the public's perspective, the danger of the walking quorum is that it may produce a consensus or predetermined outcome with the result being that the publicly-held meeting is a mere formality without any real discussion or consideration of the issue being conducted in public.

Local officials must use caution when using electronic message technologies. These technologies have the potential to create walking quorums because of the rapid pace of communication and the inability of the sender to control whether and how other members may choose to respond. For this reason, the Attorney General strongly discourages members of governmental bodies from using electronic mail to communicate with other members of the body about matters within the body's realm of authority.<sup>14</sup>

Because e-mail is so easy, quick, and inexpensive, it is unlikely that governmental bodies will refrain from using it completely. However, it is

advisable to set procedures in place or parameters for the use of e-mail to ensure that its use does not violate the open meetings law. The Attorney General's Open Meetings Law Compliance Guide suggests that inadvertent violations of the open meetings law by electronic communications can be reduced "if electronic mail is used principally to transmit information one-way to a body's membership; if the originator of the message reminds recipients to reply only to the originator, if at all; and if message recipients are scrupulous about minimizing the content and distribution of their replies."<sup>15</sup>

It is also important to be aware that a "meeting" might take place when a sufficient number of members are present at meetings of other governmental bodies. Clearly, planned joint meetings of governmental bodies must be separately noticed by each governmental body planning to attend the joint meeting. But what about situations where members of one governmental body independently attend the meeting of another governmental body?

In a case referred to as *Badke*,<sup>16</sup> a majority of the village board regularly attended meetings of the village plan commission to gather information about subjects over which they had decision-making responsibilities. The Wisconsin Supreme Court concluded that since the trustees regularly attended plan commission meetings, the gatherings were not chance and therefore should have been noticed as meetings of the village board. Specifically, the Wisconsin Supreme Court held that when one-half or more of the members of a governmental

11. *Id.* Wis. Stat. § 65.90(5) requires 2/3 vote to amend budget.

12. *Showers*, 135 Wis.2d at 92.

13. See *Showers*, 398 N.W.2d at 161, 164; *Governing Bodies* 339 and 371.

14. Wisconsin Department of Justice Open Meeting Compliance Guide (2019), at p. 12.

15. *Id.*

16. *Badke*, *supra*, n.9.

body attend a meeting of another governmental body to gather information about a subject over which they have ultimate decision-making responsibility, such a gathering is a “meeting” within the meaning of the open meetings law and must be noticed as such, unless the gathering is social or chance.

Thus, whenever half or more of the members of one governmental body regularly attend or plan in advance to attend the meeting of another governmental body, it is necessary to provide notice that a majority of that body will be attending the meeting of another body for the purpose of observing and gathering information. However, municipalities should avoid routinely placing boilerplate language designed to comply with *Badke* at the bottom of all committee, commission, and board meetings notices.

Such a *Badke* notice should be provided only if governing body members routinely attend the meetings of a second

body, such as a committee or commission, or the chair of the governmental body or clerk has been informed or otherwise has reason to believe that governing body members will likely be attending the meeting of the second body.

*Badke* also held that when a quorum of a governing body is present at a meeting of a second governmental body merely because all of the individual members of the quorum make up the membership of the second governmental body, additional notice is *not* required.<sup>17</sup>

Local officials should not place too much reliance on the exception to the definition of a meeting for chance or social gatherings. Remember, that exception is qualified by the tag “not intended to avoid” the law. If members of a body get together by chance or for a social occasion there is no violation of the law unless the discussion turns to matters pertaining to that body, in which case the gathering probably converts to an improper meeting.

By now it should be clear that governmental body members must be very careful when discussing public body business with other members outside of a properly noticed meeting. If governmental body members should arguably violate the law by discussing matters outside of a meeting, a wise course to take would be to make sure that the matter receives an appropriate level of discussion at a properly noticed meeting before it is voted on. This may help avoid prosecution and decrease the likelihood that a court will void the action.

Part 2 will discuss the open meetings law’s notice requirements, as well as closed sessions, and enforcement and penalties under the law.

### **Governing Bodies 135R11 (part 1)**

#### **About the Author:**

Claire Silverman is Legal Counsel for the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. She joined the League staff in 1992. Contact Claire at [cms@lwm-info.org](mailto:cms@lwm-info.org)

17. *Id.* at 417-418.

## Do You Have Yours? League Legal Resources

The comprehensive League Legal Resources is available on USB Flash Drive and CD Rom. It is updated annually and is searchable.



The League’s Legal Resources gives you instant access, saving you time and money by providing you with quick answers. The easy-to-use search engine allows you to simply type in any word, phrase, or number, and rapidly find every entry that contains your search query.

The folio format also allows you to customize your version by creating a shadow file with color and style highlights, bookmarks, notes, and pop-up links within the text.

The League’s Legal Resources can only be ordered through American Legal Publishing  
<http://www.amlegal.com/product-category/wisconsin-cd-order-form/>

# Understanding and Complying With Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law (Part 2)

Claire Silverman, Legal Counsel, League of Wisconsin Municipalities



*Author's Note:* This is Part 2 of a 2-part legal comment providing an overview of Wisconsin's Open Meetings law requirements. Part 1, which focused on the statutory definitions of "governmental body" and "meeting" and the concepts of walking and negative quorums, appeared in the June issue.

## Notice Requirement

The open meetings law requires that all meetings of a governmental body be preceded by public notice. The presiding officer of a governmental body, or that person's designee (typically the clerk), must give proper notice of a meeting 24 hours in advance. If good cause exists and 24-hour notice is impossible or impractical, shorter notice may be given but in no case may the notice be provided less than two hours in advance of the meeting.<sup>1</sup> If the notice is mailed, it must be mailed early enough to allow it to arrive within the statutory time frame.<sup>2</sup>

The notice must specify the body meeting, and the date, time, place, and subject matter of the meeting, and include any contemplated closed sessions. The notice must be in such form as is "reasonably likely to apprise" members of the public and the news media of the above.<sup>3</sup> Whether notice is

sufficiently specific is not amenable to a bright line rule but instead is subject to a "reasonableness standard" which requires taking into account the particular circumstances of the situation. This includes analyzing such factors as the burden of providing more detailed notice, whether the subject is of particular public interest, and whether it involves non-routine action that the public would be unlikely to anticipate.<sup>4</sup> The determination of whether notice is sufficient should be based upon what information is available to the officer noticing the meeting at the time notice is provided, and what it would be reasonable for the officer to know rather than determined from the standpoint of when the meeting actually takes place.<sup>5</sup>

Municipalities should not rely on broad umbrella clauses such as "old business" or "miscellaneous business" on the agenda to take up unforeseen matters which arise shortly before the scheduled meeting. It is best to deal with late-breaking events by amending the notice, with 24 hours prior to the meeting, or postponing the matter until it can be properly noticed.

A limited exception to the subject notice requirement allows governing bodies to designate a period for public comment in the notice of the meeting.<sup>6</sup> During such a designated public comment period, a governmental body may "discuss" information raised by a member of the public.<sup>7</sup> A governmental body may not

act on matters raised during a public comment period if the subject was not on the agenda.

Some governing body members inquire whether they, as members of the public, can bring up items not specifically designated on the agenda under a period of public comment allowed by Wis. Stat. § 19.84(2). The answer is no. The limited exception allowing members of the public to bring up items not specifically on the agenda during a period of noticed public comment was intended to allow local governments to be responsive to their constituents and to allow the governing body to receive information from members of the public. It was not intended to allow governing body members to bring up items for discussion without placing the items on the agenda. Any such use of the exception by governing bodies in that way will likely be viewed as an attempt to circumvent the notice requirements of the open meetings law.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to who must be given notice of a meeting, notice has to be given to any news medium that has requested the notice, and to the official newspaper or, if there is none, to a news medium likely to give notice in the area.<sup>9</sup> The open meetings law does not require that the notice actually be published,<sup>10</sup> but requires that notice be given as required by other specific statutes governing the subject matter (e.g., Wis. Stat. §

1. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(3).

2. 77 Op. Att'y Gen. 312 (1988).

3. Wis. Stat. § 19.84.

4. *State ex rel. Buswell v. Tomah Area Sch. Dist.*, 2007 WI 71, ¶ 28, 301 Wis. 2d 178, 198, 732 N.W.2d 804, 814.

5. *Id.*, ¶ 32.

6. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(2).

7. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(2).

8. For additional discussion of this issue see *Governing Bodies* 361.

9. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(1)(b).

10. *Martin v. Wray*, 473 F. Supp. 1131 (E.D. Wis. 1979); 77 Op. Att'y Gen. 312 (1988).

62.23(7)(d)2, requires a Class 2 notice be published in advance of a proposed rezoning.<sup>11</sup> The law also requires some form of direct notice to the public; this requirement may be met as follows: (1) by posting the notice in at least three public places likely to give notice to persons affected; (2) posting a notice in at least one public place likely to give notice to persons affected and placing a notice electronically on the governmental body's internet site; or (3) by paid publication in a news medium likely to give notice to persons affected.<sup>12</sup>

A limited exception to the notice requirement allows subunits of governmental bodies<sup>13</sup> to meet during the meeting of the parent body, during a recess, or directly after such meeting, to discuss or act on matters that were the subject of the parent body's meeting.<sup>14</sup> The parent body's presiding officer must announce the time, place, and subject matter of the subunit meeting in advance at the meeting of the parent body. This announcement must mention any contemplated closed session.<sup>15</sup>

## Closed Sessions

Generally, meetings of governmental bodies must be held in open session. However, the law authorizes meetings to be closed if the subject matter falls within one of the specific exemptions set forth in Wis. Stat. § 19.85. The general authority to close a meeting is inapplicable where specific authority requires openness (e.g., hearings before a police and fire commission under Wis. Stat. § 62.13(5), and Board of Review meetings under § 70.46(2m)).

Section 19.85 authorizes closing meetings for a number of reasons. The exemptions most commonly used by local governments include the following:

- 1) deliberating after a quasi-judicial hearing;
- 2) considering discipline of an employee or person licensed by the municipality;
- 3) considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of a public employee;
- 4) deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, or conducting other business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session;<sup>16</sup>
- 5) considering financial, medical, social, personal history and disciplinary data of specific persons or specific personnel problems which, if discussed in public, would be likely to have a substantial adverse effect on the person's reputation; and
- 6) conferring with legal counsel with respect to litigation in which the body is involved or is likely to become involved.

See Wis. Stat. § 19.85(1)(a)-(j), for the specific exemptions. For more detailed information on the appropriate use of these exemptions, see *Governing Bodies* 375.

When closing a meeting, it is important to follow the statutory procedures. As mentioned above, closed sessions planned in advance must be specified in the public notice; however, if the closed session was not contemplated, the meeting may still

be closed for a valid reason.<sup>17</sup> The body must first convene in open session and vote to go into closed session. Before the vote is taken, the presiding officer must announce the nature of the business to be discussed and the specific statutory provision which authorizes the closed session. The vote of each member must be recorded and preserved.<sup>18</sup>

Attendance at the closed session is limited to the body, necessary staff, and other officers, such as the clerk and attorney, and any other persons whose presence is necessary for the business at hand. If the meeting is of a subunit of a parent body, such as a committee, the members of the parent body (i.e., the common council or village board) must be allowed to attend the closed session, unless the rules of the parent body provide otherwise.<sup>19</sup> Discussion in the closed session must be limited to the topics for which the meeting was closed.<sup>20</sup>

Questions sometimes arise as to whether a member of a governmental body may tape record closed sessions. An individual member of a governmental body does not have the right to record closed sessions of the governmental body. Although a governmental body is obliged under § 19.90 to make a reasonable effort to accommodate any person desiring to record, film, or photograph an open meeting, provided the person does not do so in a disruptive manner, the law does not apply to closed sessions.<sup>21</sup>

A governmental body may not reconvene in open session until 12 hours after completion of the closed session, unless notice of the subsequent open session

11. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(1)(a).

12. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(1)(b).

13. The League has opined that statutory boards or commissions, such as a library board, a utility commission and a police and fire commission, are not subunits of a common council or village board, although committees (e.g., a finance committee, a public safety committee) are typically subunits. *Governing Bodies* 310.

14. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(6).

15. 65 Op. Att'y Gen. Preface vi (1976).

16. This exemption was read narrowly by the Wisconsin court of appeals in *State ex rel Citizens for Responsible Development v. City of Milton*, 2007 WI App. 114, 300 Wis.2d 649, 731 N.W.2d 640 with the court focusing on the word "require." For an in-depth summary of that case, see *Governing Bodies* 380 (*The Municipality*, May 2007).

17. Wis. Stat. § 19.84(2); 66 Op. Att'y Gen. 106 (1977); *Governing Bodies* 325.

18. Wis. Stat. § 19.85(1). These requirements also apply to a closed session of a subunit meeting without notice as provided by § 19.84(6). 65 Op. Att'y Gen. Preface vi (1976).

19. Wis. Stat. § 19.89.

20. Wis. Stat. § 19.85(1).

21. See 66 Op. Att'y Gen. 318 (1977).

was given at the same time and in the same manner as the public notice of the meeting held prior to the closed session.<sup>22</sup>

### Penalties and Remedies

Violations of the open meetings law may be prosecuted by the district attorney, the attorney general, or by a private individual if the district attorney fails to pursue the case within a certain time frame.<sup>23</sup> Governmental body members who violate the open meetings law are subject to a forfeiture of between \$25 and \$300; this is a personal liability which may not be reimbursed by the municipality.<sup>24</sup> However, members may very likely obtain reimbursement for costs and attorney fees incurred in defending against prosecutions under the open meetings law.<sup>25</sup> Members may protect themselves from liability by voting in favor of a motion to prevent the violation (e.g., voting against going into an unauthorized closed session).<sup>26</sup> In addition to finding personal liability

for violations of the law, a court may also order the violations to cease and void action illegally taken. In order to void action taken in violation of the open meetings law, the court must find that the public interest in enforcing the open meetings law outweighs the public interest in sustaining the validity of the action taken.<sup>27</sup>

### Conclusion

Members of local governmental bodies must understand and comply with the open meetings law. As with other legal matters, officials should consult their municipal attorneys if they have questions.

For additional information on Wisconsin's open meetings law, see the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Open Meetings Law Compliance Guide on the Department of Justice's website <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/office-open-government/open-government-law-and-compliance-guides>

### Governing Bodies 315R11 (part 2)

#### About the Author:

Claire Silverman is Legal Counsel for the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. Claire's responsibilities include supervising the legal services provided by the League, answering questions of a general nature for officials and employees of member municipalities, writing legal articles for the League's magazine and amicus briefs in appellate cases involving issues of statewide concern to municipalities, organizing an annual institute for municipal attorneys, and educating local officials on a variety of topics pertaining to their duties. In addition, she coordinates legal material for the League's web page. Claire joined the League staff in 1992. Contact Claire at [cms@lwm-info.org](mailto:cms@lwm-info.org)

22. Wis. Stat. § 19.85(2).

23. Wis. Stat. § 19.97(1), (2) and (4).

24. Wis. Stat. § 19.96.

25. Wis. Stat. §§ 62.115, 895.35 and 895.46(1)(a); 77 Op. Att'y Gen. 177 (1988).

26. Wis. Stat. § 19.96.

27. Wis. Stat. § 19.97(3).

## Do You Have Yours? League Legal Resources

The comprehensive League Legal Resources is available on USB Flash Drive and CD. It is updated annually and is searchable.



The League's Legal Resources gives you instant access, saving you time and money by providing you with quick answers. The easy-to-use search engine allows you to simply type in any word, phrase, or number, and rapidly find every entry that contains your search query.

The folio format also allows you to customize your version by creating a shadow file with color and style highlights, bookmarks, notes, and pop-up links within the text.

The League's Legal Resources can only be ordered through American Legal Publishing <http://www.amlegal.com/product-category/wisconsin-cd-order-form/>



## Open Meetings Law FAQ 2

### **Must a common council, village board or other municipal governmental body allow a citizen to tape record or video tape an open session of the body?**

Generally speaking, yes. The open meetings law requires a governmental body to make a reasonable effort to accommodate any person desiring to record, film, or photograph its proceedings in open session. Wis. Stat. § 19.90. However, § 19.90 also provides that recording, filming, or photographing a meeting in a manner that interferes with the conduct of the meeting or the rights of the participants is not permitted. Thus, if a person's recording or filming activities interferes with the conduct of a meeting or the rights of the participants, the governmental body may order that person to record or film in a non-disruptive manner, or, if that is not possible, to cease recording or filming. The governmental body maintains ultimate control over matters of public conduct and decorum during its meetings.

The accommodation required by § 19.90 does not apply to closed sessions. A governmental body may prohibit any of its members or any other person present from recording or filming a closed session. (rev. 9/19)



# Open Meetings Law FAQ 4

## **Can members of a governmental body violate the open meeting law by communicating regarding city or village business via telephone or e-mail?**

Yes, members of a governmental body can violate the open meeting law by communicating regarding city or village business if there is communication amongst a sufficient number of the members. The Wisconsin Supreme Court has held that the open meeting law applies whenever members of a governmental body “meet” to engage in government business, whether it's for purposes of discussion, decision or information gathering, if the number of members present are sufficient to determine the parent body's course of action regarding the proposal discussed at the meeting. *State ex rel. Newspapers, Inc. v. Showers*, 135 Wis.2d 77, 398 N.W.2d 154 (1987). In *Showers*, the court recognized that members of a governmental body can violate the open meeting law by participating in what is called a "walking quorum." A walking quorum is a series of gatherings among separate groups of members, each less than quorum size, who agree, tacitly or explicitly, to act and vote in a certain manner in numbers sufficient to reach a quorum. See 69 Op. Att'y Gen. 143 (1980); and League opinion Governing Bodies 339.

(rev. 4/19)



# Open Meetings Law FAQ 9

## **What action can a governmental body take against a member who discloses confidential information obtained during a closed session?**

If a member discloses confidential information obtained during a closed session, it is not a violation of the open meetings law. However, such behavior is understandably a matter of concern for governmental bodies and governing bodies can prohibit and establish consequences for such behavior. Some municipalities have local rules or ordinances that prohibit municipal officials from using or disclosing confidential information. Possible penalties include a fine or public censure. Where such behavior is clearly prohibited, other potential consequences for violating these local restrictions are criminal prosecution under Wis. Stat. § 946.12 for misconduct in public office or removal from office under Chapter 17 of the Wisconsin Statutes for official misconduct (see Wis. Stat. §§ 17.001, 17.12 and 17.13). (rev. 4/22)



# Open Meetings Law FAQ 14

## **Does the Open Meeting law apply to city or village committees created by a city council or village board?**

Yes. The Open Meeting law applies to governmental bodies and "governmental body" is defined to include a "state or local agency, board, commission, committee, council, department or public body corporate and politic created by constitution, statute, ordinance, rule or order . . . or a formally constituted subunit of such body." Wis. Stat. Sec. 19.82(1). Thus, city or village committees created by a city council or village board pursuant to a city or village ordinance, rule or order are subject to all Open Meeting law requirements.

# Sunset Park Master Plan

January 16, 2019

# Prepared By



**City of Sturgeon Bay**



**Applied Ecological Services**



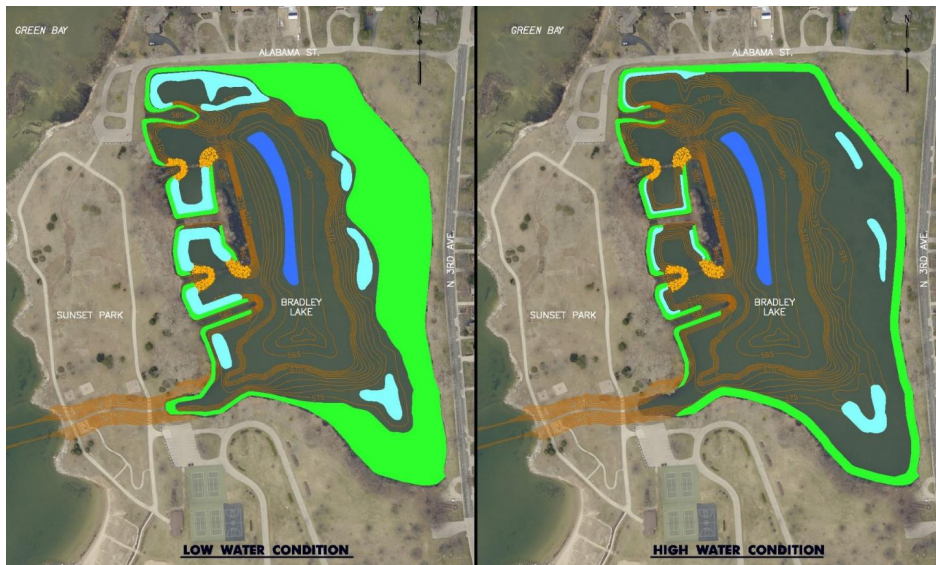
**Foth Infrastructure & Environment**



# Project Background

The master plan for Sunset Park was first instigated in 2016 following plans to remove sediment accumulation and to create additional aquatic habitat for native species by dredging Bradley Lake. While this work is being completed, parts of Sunset Park will be disrupted. The master plan that follows looks at future improvements that capitalize on the dredging project while improving circulation, landscape aesthetic, wildlife habitat, stormwater treatment, and recreational amenities for the residents and visitors to Sturgeon Bay.

The two plans below to the left provide an example of designed topography and aquatic plant vegetation zones associated with the dredging project that will re-establish the fish hatchery and optimize shoreline restoration. The aerial below to the right provides existing conditions of stormwater detention wetlands that were a separate project and recently installed as the first natural area in the park.



# Goals and Objectives

## Goals for Bradley Lake Work

- Improve **water quality**
- Create fish habitat & **fishing** nodes
- Paddle **access** to and from Bradley Lake and Bay
- Discourage **invasive species** such as phragmites and carp
- Able to be **permitted** and **funded**
- Design **improvements** to attract multiple **funding sources** (water quality, habitat, parks and rec, boating access, etc.)

## Purpose of the Master Plan

- Inform **future planning** and implementation
- Assess **opportunities** and **constraints**
- Identify **community** goals
- Incorporate recent completed **projects** at park
- Implement **phased** planning strategy
- Leverage **dredging** momentum to advance the above goals

# Existing Conditions



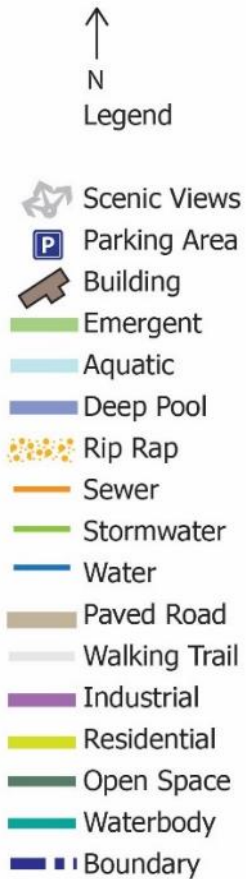
**Bradley Lake**

**Sturgeon Bay**

# Opportunities & Constraints



# Bradley Lake Improvements



# Opportunities

- Great **views** of Sturgeon Bay and Bradley Lake
- Opportunities to enhance **connections to water**
- Flat terrain allows for a variety of improvements including **reorganizing circulation system**
- Space to grow and **improve walking** trail network
- Some nice old trees and existing **vegetation**
- Underutilized lawn can transform into **native plantings** to improve habitat and **lower maintenance** costs

# Constraints

- Disconnected and **confusing circulation** system
- **Limited network** of trails
- Minimal room on **north side** of park for trail connection
- **Shipbuilding yard** is a hard edge to the south that is a source of noise and industrial views but also a **connection opportunity**
- **Playgrounds** are outdated and not **accessible** to those with disabilities
- Beach is shrinking with **higher water levels**
- Bradley Lake **channel connection** could divide park
- Plethora of dying **ash trees**

# Public Participation

Public participation has been a vital element to providing a complete master plan vision for Sunset Park. In collaboration with the City of Sturgeon Bay, two public meetings were held at City Hall to present ideas and gain feedback for the park's future. The first meeting was an open charrette where attendees voted on ideal amenities and outlined past, current, and future elements the park can accommodate.

The second meeting was a public presentation to the City Council, Parks & Recreation Board, and community members of a draft master plan with several phased options for attendees to review. This meeting provided attendees with the first interpretation of Sunset Park's overall vision that was then finalized based on public review.

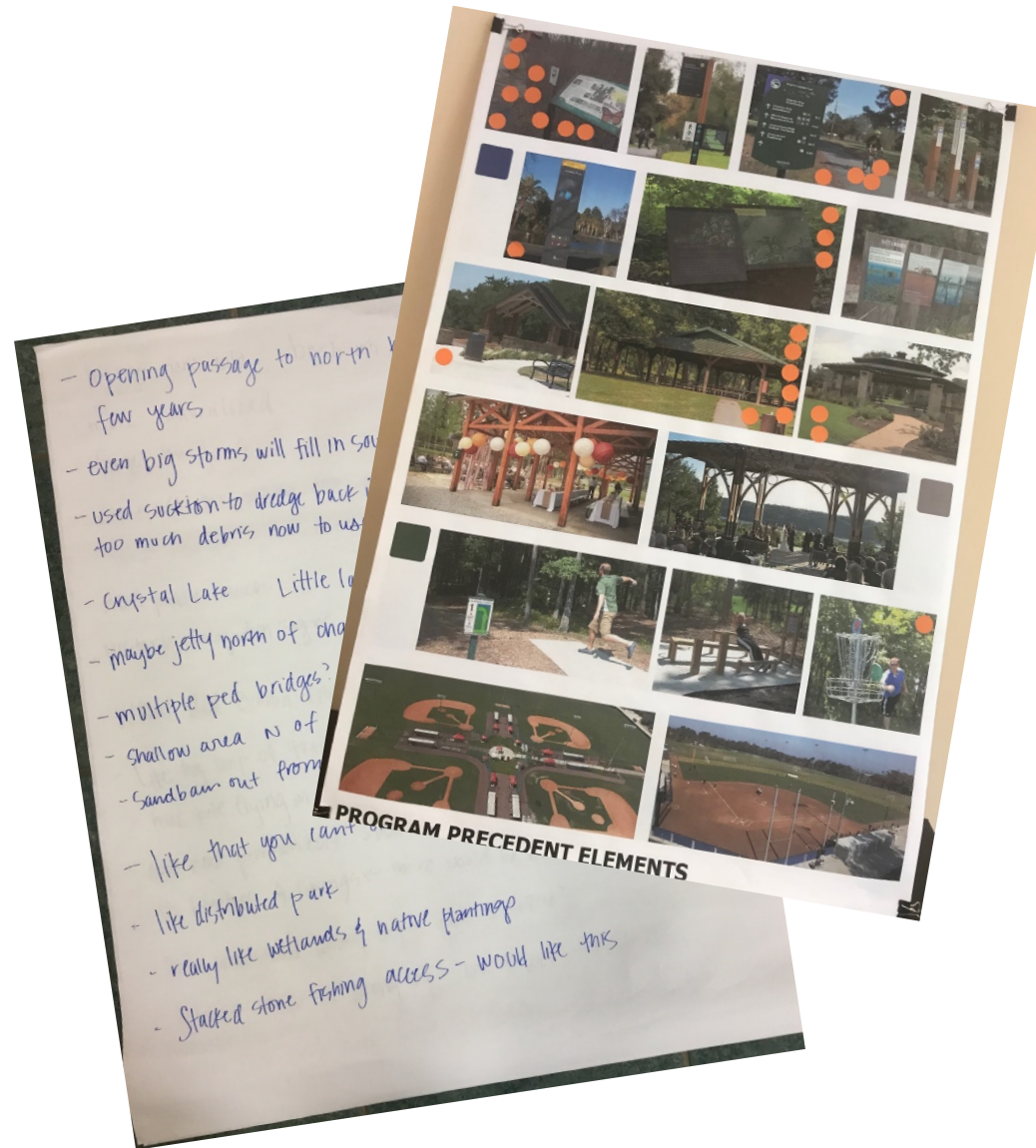
The following slides provide outlined notes of public comments from both meetings.

# Master Plan Public Charrette

October 25, 2017

Public and Board Member Comments

- Preference to expand **natural areas** with a balance between a nature conservancy and traditional recreational park.
- Provide a **trail** that surrounds the entire park with new seating areas.
- Update the existing pavilion with **upgraded amenities**
- Provide a **new enclosed pavilion** in the north area of the park for year-round events. Enhance existing Bay overlooks for sunset viewing and water access.
- Highlight the **beach** drawing locals along with visitors from northern and southern Door County.

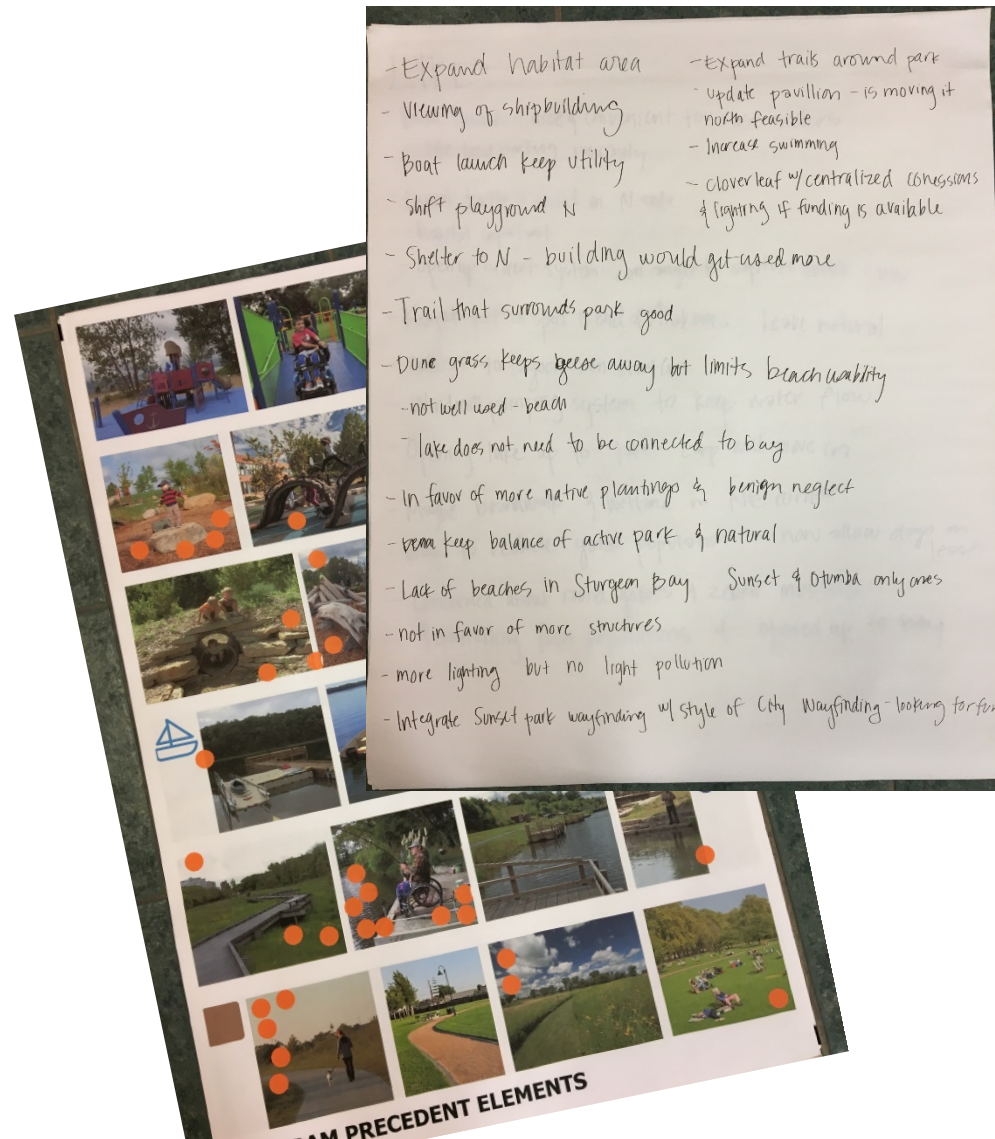


# Master Plan Public Charrette

October 25, 2017

## Public and Board Member Comments

- Reconfigure the **ballfields into a cloverleaf layout** with new lighting and concessions.
- **Upgrade playground** equipment to ADA standards and incorporating nature play zones.
- Provide educational **signage** or incorporate into the City wayfinding plan.
- Accentuate Sturgeon Bay ship building history with an **overlook** from the park into neighboring ship yard.
- Debatable measure whether opening the lake to the bay may allow invasive species to enter the lake and impact overall **water quality**.



# Master Plan Draft Public Meeting

March 28, 2018

## Public and Board Member Comments

- Preference toward keeping the north park **passive recreation** and the south area **recreation** based.
- Limited agreement for expense of adding second event **pavilion**. Favor in **renovating** existing pavilion.
- Updated central **playground** and addition of **nature play** amenities is favored.
- Create a higher **overlook** to accommodate ship yard viewing for all ages.
- The **boardwalk** features and **tea house** create great passive experiences for park users.



# Master Plan Overview

The Master Plan is divided into two phases and an alternate option. The first phase is associated with improvements aligned with dredging Bradley Lake and amenity enhancements heavily in favor of implementation by the public. This first phase focuses on the north area of the park ultimately creating a passive recreation experience with added naturalized area to improve wildlife habitat and organic stormwater management.

The second phase provides a complete vision for the park post construction of phase one. Based on public interest in improving circulation and active recreation in the southern region of the park, phase two provides a central drive with expanded boat and vehicular parking. The alternate park plan has been provided as an overall park vision with an intimate Bradley Lake sand beach and paddle craft launch without the channel open to Sturgeon Bay.

Each point of enhancement has an associated opinion of probable cost based on a magnitude of planning with a contingency reflecting implementation experience and current 2019 economic parameters. A cost range is provided for particular elements from low to high based on customizable elements.

# Master Plan - Phase 1

STURGEON BAY

FLORIDA ST.

ALABAMA ST.

N 3RD AVE.

NORTH



## Legend



Existing Parking

Existing Roadway

Concrete Path

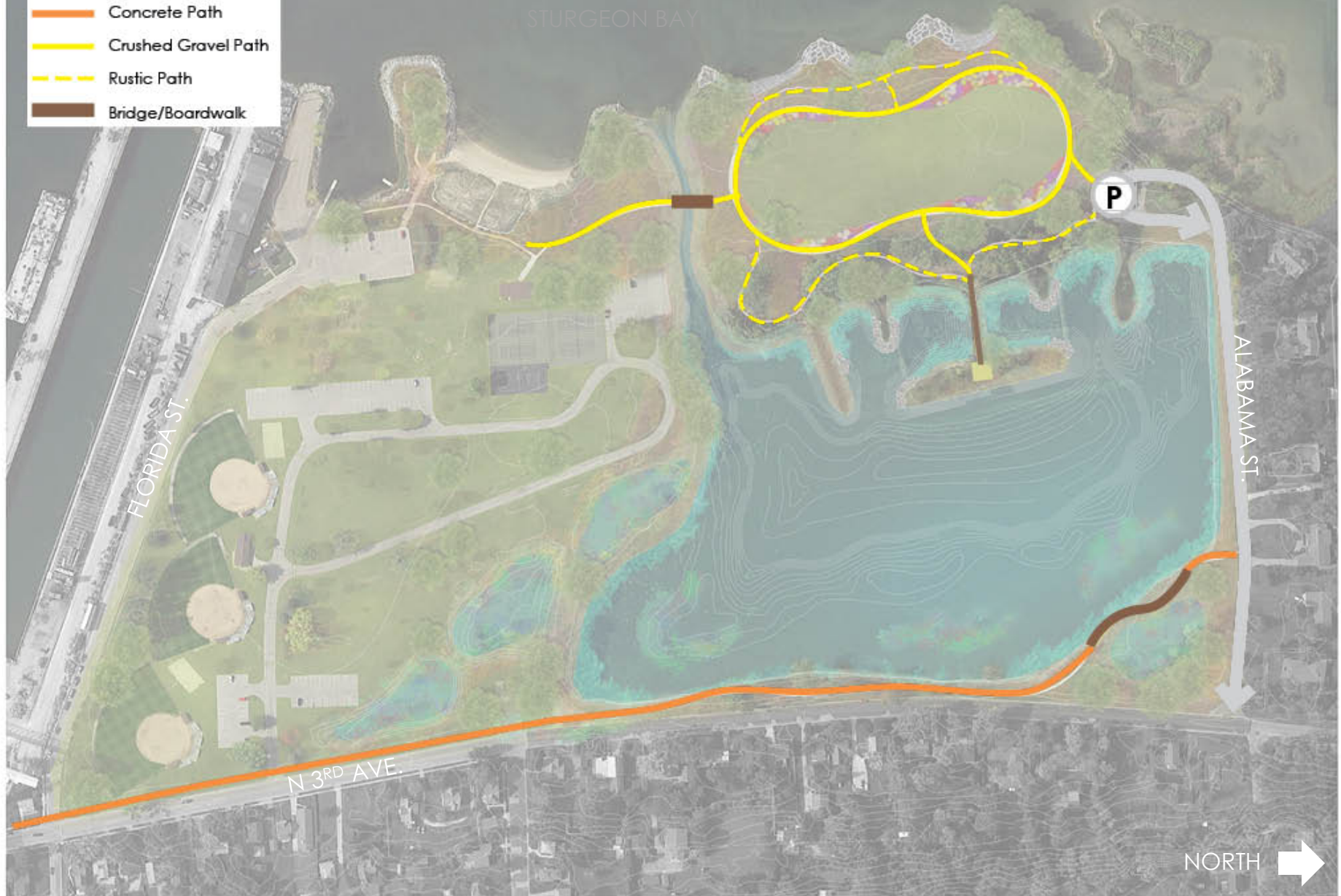
Crushed Gravel Path

Rustic Path

Bridge/Boardwalk

# Trail Improvements

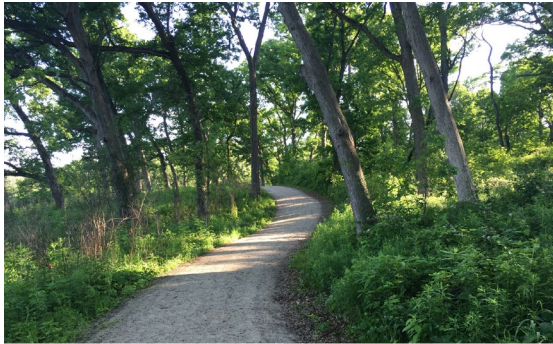
STURGEON BAY



NORTH



# Trail Improvements



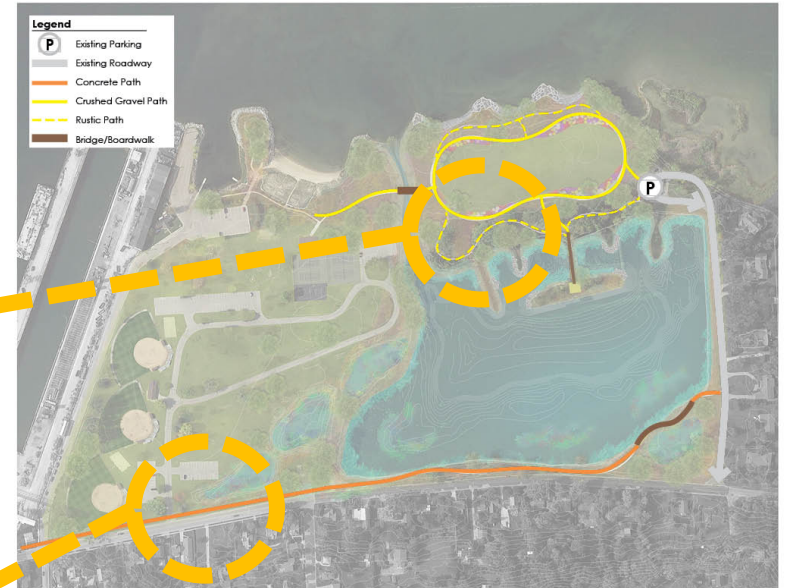
**Crushed Gravel Trails**



**Rustic Trails**



**Concrete Path Extension Along 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave**



## Trail Improvements

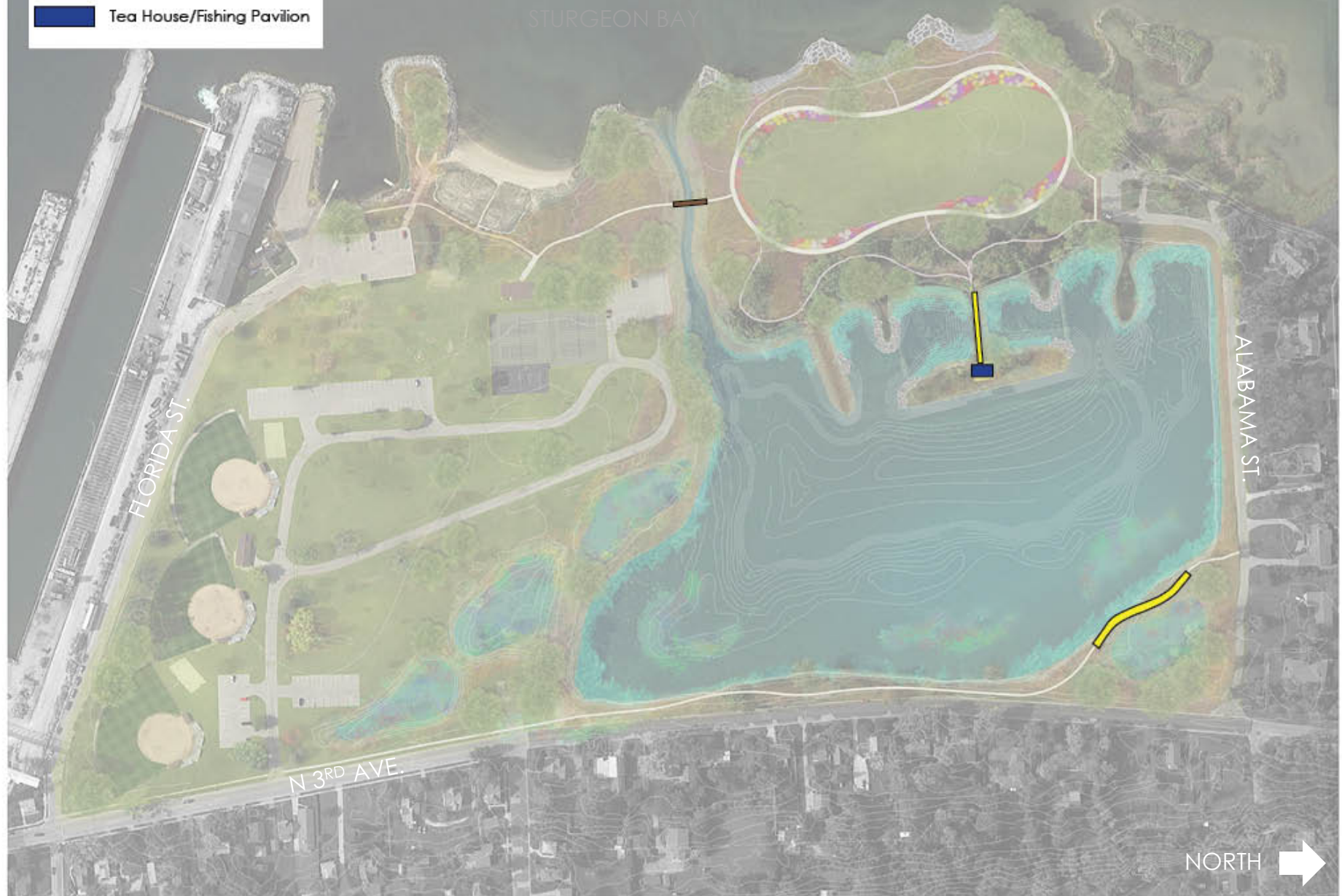
Remove existing trails	
Install concrete walking paths	
Install gravel walking paths	
Install rustic trails	
	<b>\$124,000.00</b>

## Legend

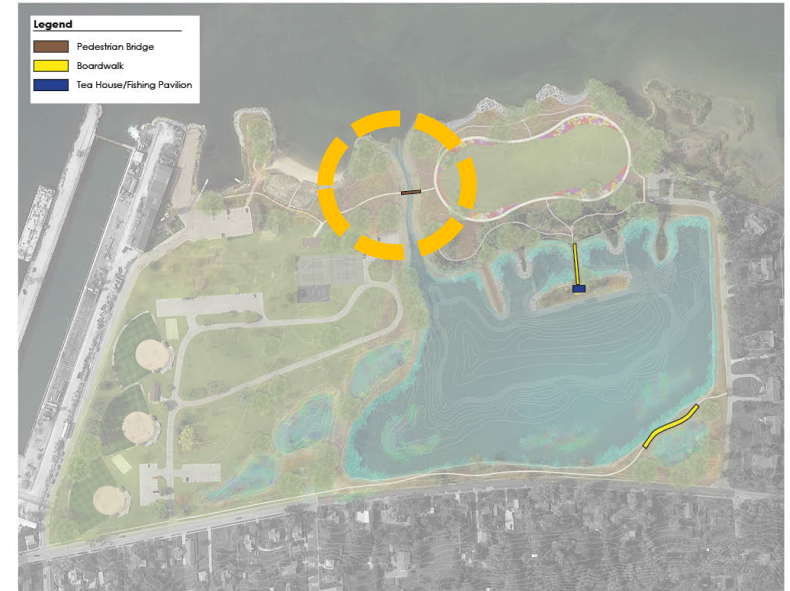
-  Pedestrian Bridge
-  Boardwalk
-  Tea House/Fishing Pavilion

# Structures

STURGEON BAY



# Pedestrian Channel Bridge



Structures			
Pedestrian bridge	\$146,000.00	to	\$ 219,000.00

# Tea House/Fishing Pavilion



## Trail Structures

Tea house pavilion	\$52,000.00	to	\$ 78,000.00
--------------------	-------------	----	--------------



# Tea House/Fishing Pavilion Boardwalk



**Provides Lake Observation Point and Fishing Access**



**Boardwalk Connects the Park to the Tea House Island**



## Structures

Boardwalk – Tea House	\$41,000.00	to	\$ 62,000.00
-----------------------	-------------	----	--------------



**Opportunity to Provide ADA Accessibility**

# Northeast Wetland Boardwalk



Section View of Proposed Wetland Boardwalk



## Structures

Boardwalk - Northeast Wetland	\$128,000.00	to	\$ 192,000.00
-------------------------------	--------------	----	---------------



Provides Lake Bradley Observation



Optimal Birding Platform



Connected to Concrete Path

# Landscape

STURGEON BAY

## Legend

- Mown Lawn
- Ornamental Plantings
- Upland Native Meadow
- Emergent Vegetation

FLORIDA ST.

N 3RD AVE.

ALABAMA ST.

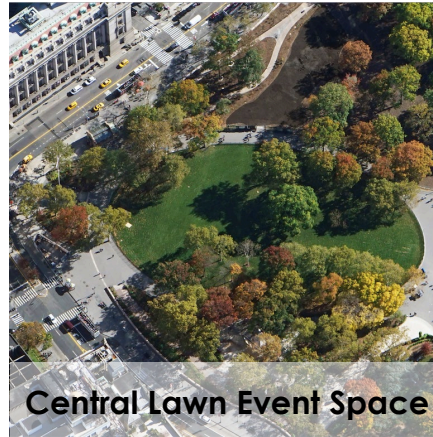
NORTH



# Landscape Enhancements



Ornamental Landscape Beds



Central Lawn Event Space



Naturalized Shoreline Along Lake and Channel



Lawn Converted to Low Prairie



Emergent Vegetation

## Landscape

Trees of varying sizes throughout phase 1	
Shrubs and perennials in planting beds	
Emergent plants-lakeshore and channel	
Native seeding in naturalized areas	
Seeded turfgrass in active lawn areas	
	<b>\$396,000.00</b>

# Northeast Wetland



**Low Drainage Point Converted to Wetland**



## Northeast Wetland

Earthwork for northeast wetland	
Native seed and erosion control	
Emergent plants	
	<b>\$42,000.00</b>



**Expansion of Existing Turtle Habitat**



**Provides Internal Park Buffer and Enhanced Property Value**

## Legend



Fishing Access



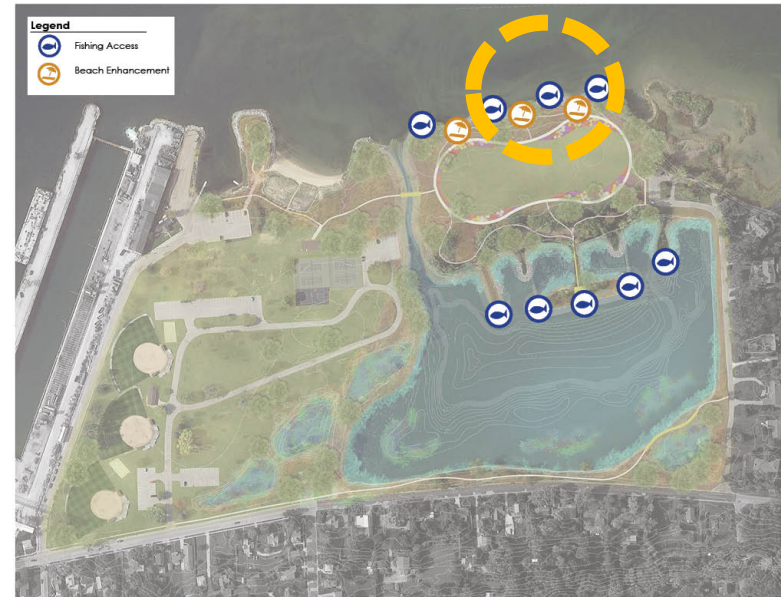
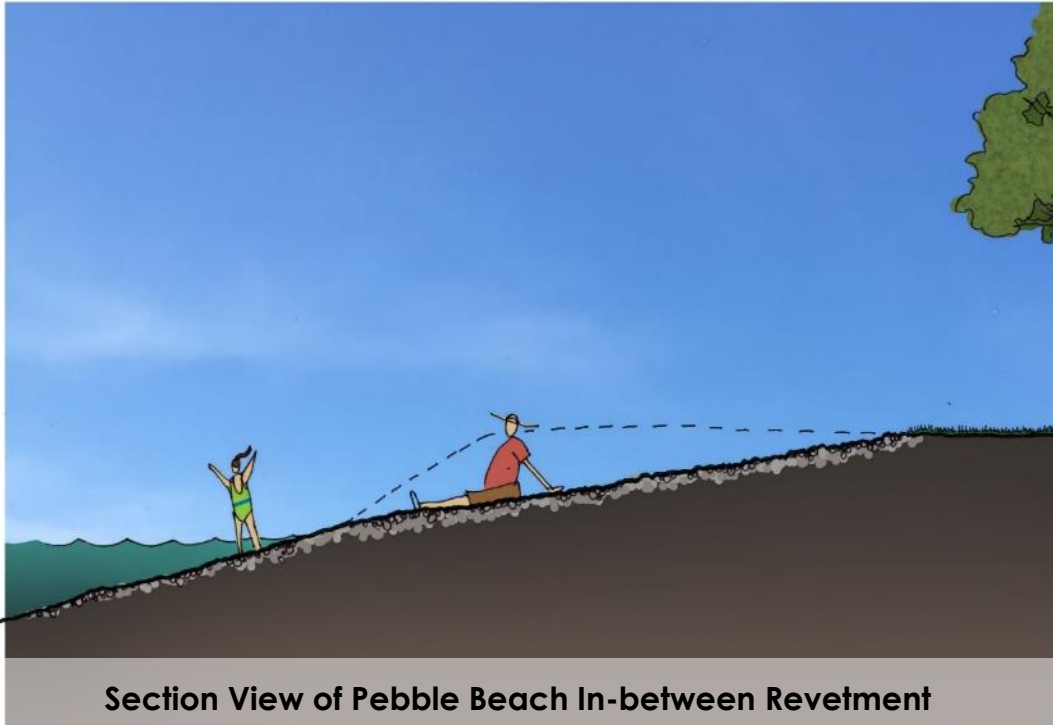
Beach Enhancement

# Activity

STURGEON BAY



# Pebble Beach Cove



## Activity – Shoreline Revetment

Three pebble beach coves

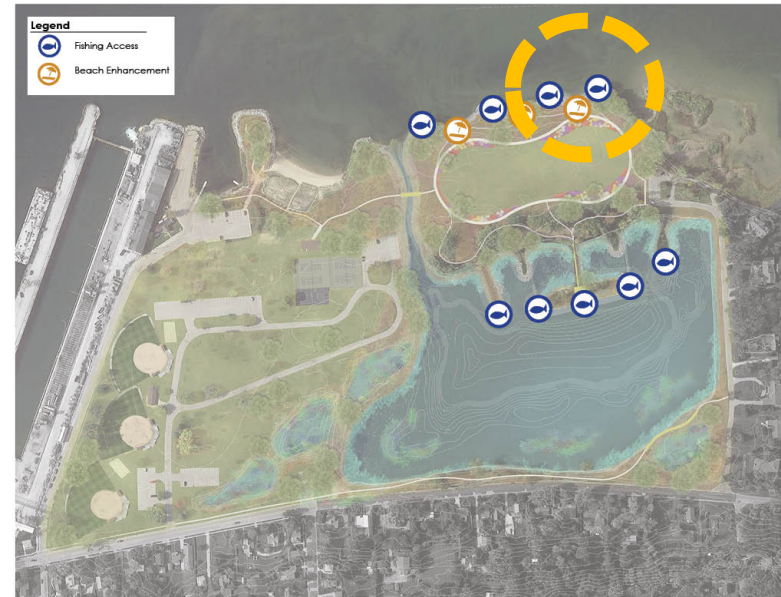
\$133,000.00



# Stepped Stone Revetment



Section View of Shoreline Revetment and Fishing Access



## Activity – Shoreline Revetment

Boulder/rip-rap revetment	\$122,000.00
Four stepped stone revetments	\$135,000.00



Boulder Revetment Adjoining Step Access



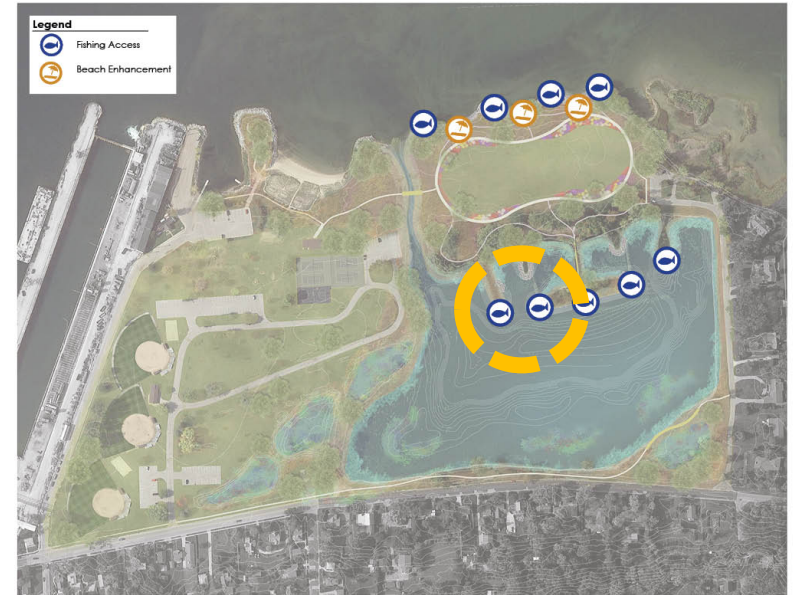
# Fishing Access



Four Fishing Access Points Along Bradley Lake



Stone Steps Accommodate Fluctuating Lake Depth



## Activity

Four stepped stone fishing access points

\$67,000.00



Encourages Direct Water Access Routes

# Master Plan - Phase 2

STURGEON BAY



# Circulation

STURGEON BAY

## Legend



Existing Parking



Proposed Parking



Proposed Roadway



Concrete Path



Crushed Gravel Path



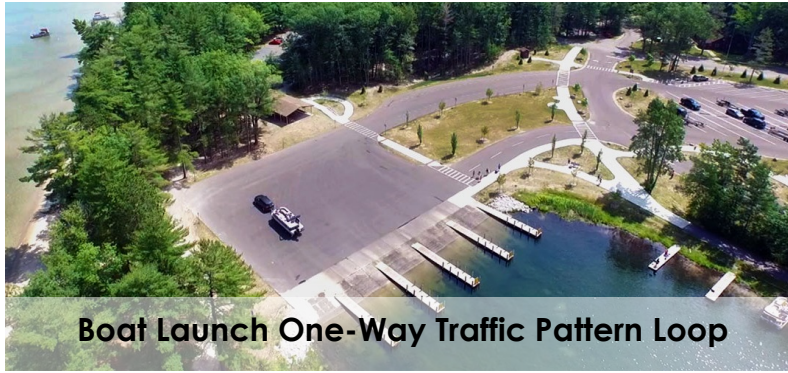
NORTH



# Circulation



Enhanced Boat Launch Trailer Parking



Boat Launch One-Way Traffic Pattern Loop



Proposed Single Roadway Loop



Gravel Path



## Circulation - Roadway Realignment

Demolish existing roadway	
Prepare and pave new roadway	
	\$566,000.00



## Circulation - Parking

Demolish storage building	
Demolish existing parking lots	
Resurface single parking lot to remain	
Prepare and pave new parking lots	
	\$554,000.00

## Circulation - Trail Improvements

Remove existing remaining trails	
Install concrete walking paths	
Install gravel walking paths	
	\$213,000.00

## Legend

-  Renovated Picnic Shelter
-  New Concessions Building

# Structures

STURGEON BAY



NORTH



# Renovated Picnic Shelter

After



Perspective of Renovated Picnic Shelter with Restroom Extension

Before

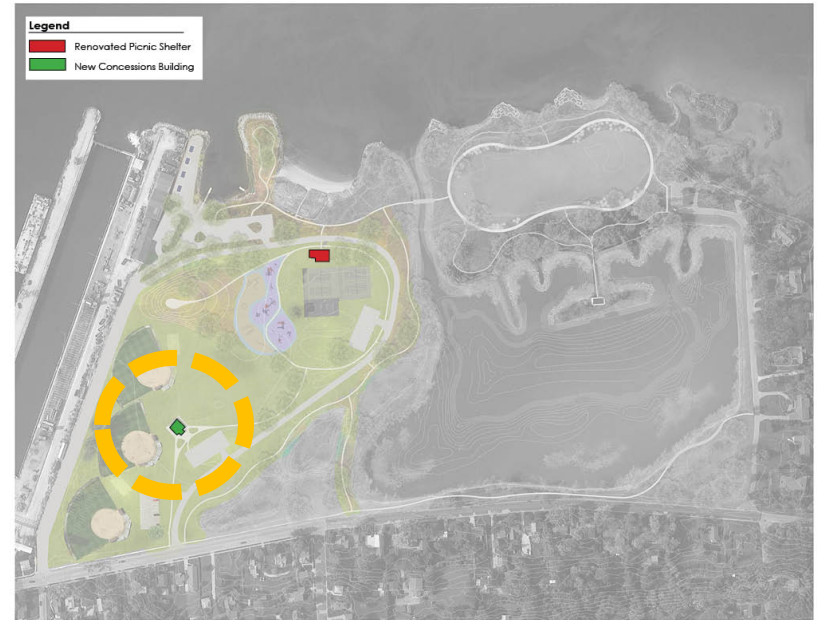


## Structures

Renovate picnic shelter	\$57,000.00 to	\$90,000.00
-------------------------	----------------	-------------



# New Concessions Building



Structures			
Demolish old concessions building			
New concessions building			
		\$312,000.00	to \$468,000.00



# Landscape

STURGEON BAY

## Legend

- Mown Lawn
- Ornamental Plantings
- Upland Native Meadow
- Emergent Vegetation



# Landscape Enhancements



## Landscape

Trees of varying sizes throughout phase 2  
 Shrubs and perennials in planting beds  
 Emergent plants-lakeshore and channel  
 Native seeding in naturalized areas  
 Seeded turfgrass in active lawn areas

**\$62,000.00**

## Legend



Playground



Ship Yard Overlook



Kayak Storage

# Activity

STURGEON BAY



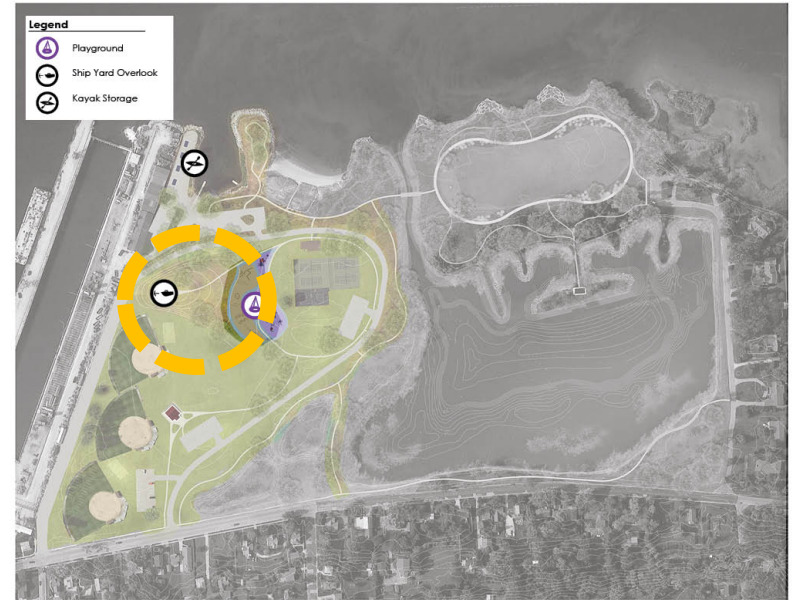
NORTH



# Overlook and Butterfly Sanctuary



Overlook Constructed with Dredge Material

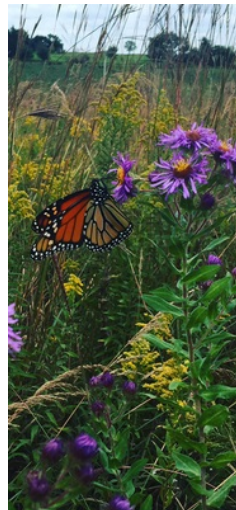


## Activity - Overlook/Butterfly Sanctuary

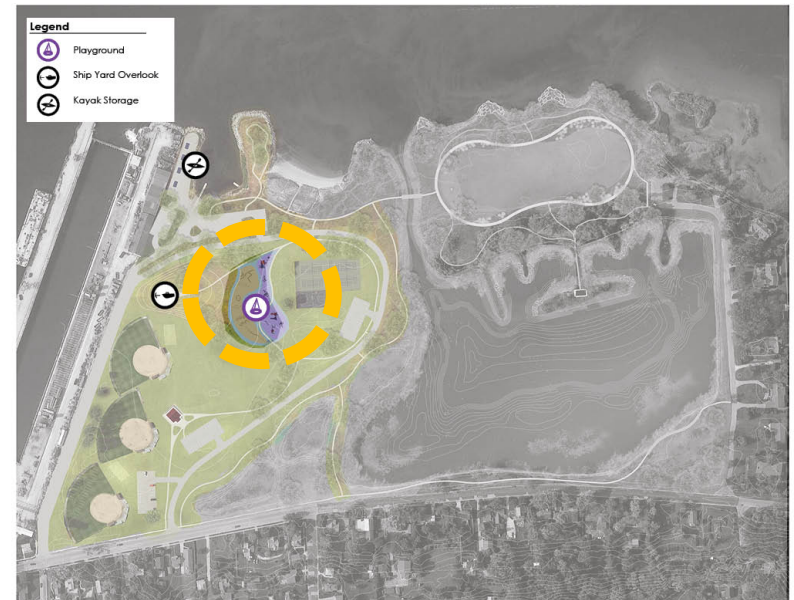
Naturalized overlook built from dredged material	\$175,000.00
--	--------------



Prairie Restoration Provides Butterfly Habitat



# Playground



## Activity - Playground

Playground-soft surface play	\$390,000.00	to	\$600,000.00
Playground-nature play	\$39,000.00	to	\$60,000.00



ADA Accessible Play Features



Nature Play Features for Creative Amusement

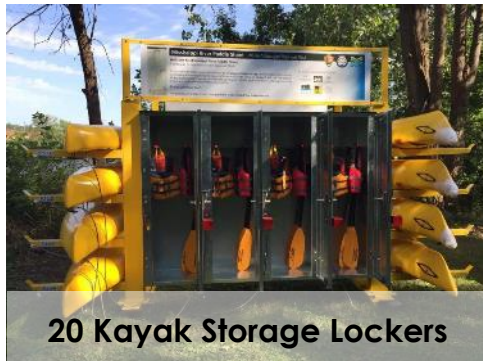
# Site Features



**Interpretive Signage**



**Wayfinding Signage**



**20 Kayak Storage Lockers**

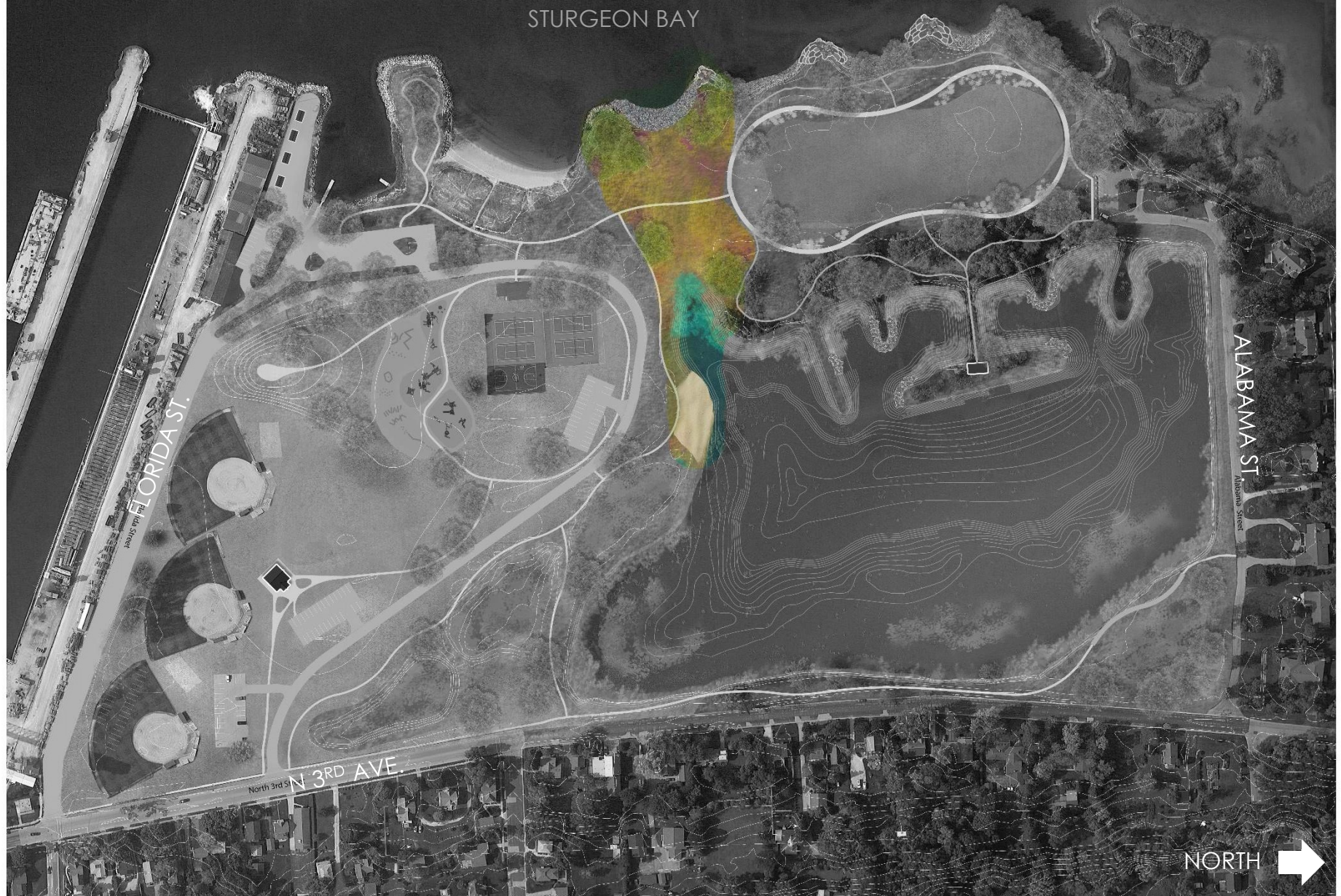


## Activity - Site Features

Benches	
Picnic tables	
Dog waste stations	
Trash receptacles	
Signage - wayfinding and interpretive	
Twenty kayak storage lockers	
	<b>\$80,000.00</b>

# Master Plan - Alternate

STURGEON BAY



NORTH



# Sand Beach



## Activity - Shoreline Revetment

Single pebble beach cove	\$170,000.00
Boulder/rip-rap revetment	\$91,000.00
Single stepped stone revetment	\$173,000.00

## Activity - Sand Beach

Sand beach	\$1,300.00
------------	------------



**Applied Ecological Services**



**Foth Infrastructure & Environment**



**HISTORY OF LITTLE LAKE**  
**Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin**  
**by John L. Herlache**



## PROLOGUE

The history of Little Lake needed to be written. The introduction of the sawmill into the community had a real impact on our development and growth. Prior to 1853 all buildings were log. The mills ended that. From that point on building would flourish; the large trees could be harvested and sawed into lumber. The log buildings could only utilize smaller poles. Prior to the advent of the mills, the large virgin trees were often cut and burned because they couldn't move them and they couldn't cut them into workable lumber. The dairy industry took off about 1875 because it was now cheaper and faster to build the needed large barns for winter hay storage.

By 1870 several small portable sawmills were pulled around the countryside and smaller stationary mills were set up in nearly every village north and several villages south in the county. The sawmill ushered in the miracle 50 years from 1850 to 1900. No other event propelled us from wilderness to a fairly well defined community as the advent of the sawmill.

Thanks for this important piece of history that should not be forgotten.

George Evenson

## **HISTORY OF LITTLE LAKE**

Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

By John L. Herlache

In 1852, Little Lake was called Crystal Lake (some have referred to it as Silver Lake) because of its clear and reflective water. This was particularly true of the south end of the lake and a smaller connecting lake on its southeast end. There were springs that fed the smaller lake and Crystal Lake near their junction accounting for the clear water. The sparkling clear water formed an upper layer over the lower marl-filled water characteristic of other parts of the lake. The north end was marsh with another smaller, marshy lake connecting to it. The west side of the lake was an island. Its location extended from what today would be a little north of Alabama Street south to Georgia Street (if extended to the Bay). The southern passage connecting to Sturgeon Bay was clear, draining the southern end of the lake. The northern passage was swamp. Tall majestic pines grew down to the shores of the lakes and the bay. Crystal Lake teemed with small mouth black bass. Small mouth bass and pickerel spawned in the lakes, the spawning adults entering the lakes via the north and south passages.

The Moravians living in Green Bay determined that they wanted to obtain land of their own. They were living on land owned by Otto Tank, a fellow Moravian. In 1850 Moravian Abraham Clark patented the 1,500 acres of land surrounding Silver (Crystal) Lake on behalf of the Green Bay Moravians. They decided they preferred to settle on Eagle Harbor in northern Door County and sold the land to Otto Tank.

The geography of this area was very attractive for creating a logging and lumber industry. On September 11, 1852, Lyman Bradley and David Crandall from Lockport, New York, purchased the land surrounding Crystal Lake and its two sister lakes plus the surrounding land from Otto Tank. The area was ideal for a sawmill. Its Sturgeon Bay location provided a large protected harbor where timber could be received and lumber could be shipped. Crystal Lake was located outside of the narrow neck of the bay where a dangerous reef was located. The southern waterway would accommodate smaller boats and logs brought in from Green Bay could be sluiced into Crystal Lake where they were protected and easily available for delivery to the mill. Crystal Lake would also be available for bucket brigades when there was fire in the mill, which was a relatively frequent occurrence. Rumors of the possibility of a ship canal connecting Sturgeon Bay to Lake Michigan most certainly added to the attraction for the area. Ultimately the canal was started in 1873 and completed in 1881. On May 6, 1893, the Sturgeon Bay and Lake Michigan Ship Canal and Harbor Co. deeded its property to the U.S. government for \$81,833, making use of the canal free of taxes and fees.

In 1853, a crew of men who were brought from Lockport began cutting the timber around the lakes. By October 1853, construction of a sawmill on the island was completed. The sawmill was the first industry in what would become Sturgeon Bay.

However, the first industry also began a long history of abuse of Crystal Lake and destruction of its two smaller connected lakes.

The mill was called Bradley Mill, but was also referred to as the Island Mill and as the Lower Mill. As time passed, the two attached lakes were filled in with sawdust, edgings, wood slabs and shingle slats. Crystal Lake also received a large share of the refuse. In its damaged state and reduced size, the name of the lake changed from Crystal Lake to Bradley Lake or Slab Lake. Ultimately it became known as Little Lake.

Initially the people living on the island and the employees of the mill moved to and from the island by rowboats or walking over the winter ice. The mill employed between thirty and forty people. Each of three mills had built their own communities, creating three small company settlements for each mill making up the town of Otumba (1, the Bradley-Crandall mill; 2, D.H. Burtis' mill located where Bay Ship Building is now located (near Iowa St.); and 3, Robert Graham's mill; located at the base of what is now Pennsylvania Street). For brief times, Otumba was called Graham or Tehema, but on February 13, 1860, the village was officially named Sturgeon Bay. This was a name the Indians had given it because the bay was shaped like a sturgeon and it was populated with a large number of the fish.

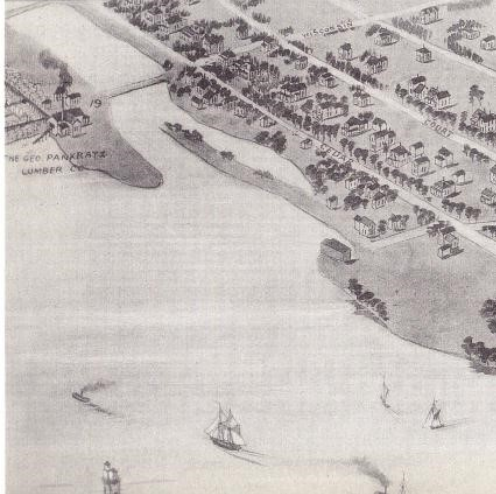
Burtis and Works took over the Island Mill in February 1854, as a result of a lawsuit in Lockport, New York. They renamed the mill Burtis and Works. However, the suit was soon settled and Bradley regained control of his mill and changed the name back to Bradley Mill in the fall of the same year. Burtis then built his own mill (the middle mill) in 1855. Works remained a partner of the Bradley Mill, but deeded his share to Mrs. Bradley in 1856. Burtis was not successful, the mill was closed after a few years and Burtis returned to Lockport, New York.

The Bradley Mill was located on the south part of the island. A wagon shop was located in the lower level of the mill where wagons and sleighs were housed and repaired. There was room south of the mill for a blacksmith shop and, a little further south, the company store. A two-story boarding house for single men was south of the store. Two hundred feet north of the boarding house and just east of the mill was a large barn housing the animals and feed. By 1856 five homes had been built around the boarding house and toward the north end of the island, north of the mill and barn. Bradley's home was the furthest south near the tip of the island and north of the inlet.

In 1855 a causeway was built with wood slabs, crossing the southern portion of Bradley Lake. A twenty-foot central area was left open to allow logs to pass through. A bridge connected the two ends, creating the causeway. The causeway and connecting road were named Bradley Street.

On September 12, 1867, a severe rainstorm took the causeway out. A second causeway was constructed further north on the lake. This bridge began at the base of what now is

Delaware Street and bisected the lake to the center of the island. Eventually the lake south of the causeway was filled in with discarded materials from the mill.



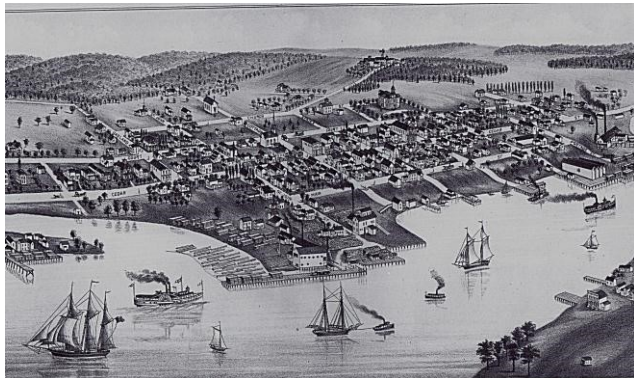
This is a depiction of where the two causeways were located, drawn in 1893. Note the small connecting lake on the SE side of the lake.

Two piers were built. One extended out into the Bay to unload and load the ships. The other pier was parallel to shore in front of the store to handle supplies. The two were connected in 1857 and were essentially one continuous dock. By this time, the lumber camps and milling business employed 80 people. In 1854, the mill produced 100,000 feet of lumber and 30,000 feet of lathes.

The national recession of 1857 caused the mills to close. With the lumber industry being by far the largest source of employment, Sturgeon Bay fell on hard times. The fall and winter were referred to as “the time of potatoes and salt”, essentially the only food available. Bradley had to sell his cow, which was the only cow in the area. As a result of the recession, all wood products available were shipped to Milwaukee and Chicago to settle debts. With the 1858 spring sucker run, large amounts of the fish were taken from the streams, and the worst part of the recession for the inhabitants was over. The mill went back in business in 1858. In the winter of 58-59, between four and five million board feet had been “banked” to ship to the active construction markets in the southern parts of Lake Michigan. In addition to being the largest long lumber mill in the state, the mill was also able to sell its sawdust for “paving” the streets in Sturgeon Bay and as insulation for the icehouses.

Lyman Bradley was the first in Sturgeon Bay to enlist in the Civil War in 1860. He and his family moved to Buffalo, New York. S. D. Clark bought the mill in 1863 after it had been closed for two years and kept it in operation until 1877 when George O. and Marshall Spear bought the mill. The Spears had extensive experience with saw mills and they were also experienced ship builders, having built several scows for hauling lumber and tugs for pulling logs at a mill they had owned previously. The first ship built at the Spear Mill was in 1877. They opened a shipping line to haul lumber and other goods to Milwaukee and Chicago and to bring cargo back. Those who were in the shipping business in the Milwaukee area claimed that it would only amount to a “dummy line”. After a very successful first year, Spears decided to name it “The Dummy Line”, poking fun back at his critics.

During the mid and late 1850's a farmer/lumberman community developed in the surrounding area. In the summer crops were grown on cleared land and the timber they had harvested in the winter was delivered to the mills. The timber was used for saw logs, cord wood, railroad ties, telegraph poles, and farm posts. As a result of the growing farm industry, the first wheat gristmill was constructed by Bradley on the island north of the sawmill in 1859. By 1880, all of the previously cut over land that had been owned by Bradley was turned into farmland. It extended from the now existing streets of Kentucky Street on the south, Third Avenue on the west, Fifth Avenue on the east, and extending a little north of Alabama. The upper or eastern portion grew wheat and oats and the lower portion near Third Avenue grew potatoes. After being destroyed by fire in 1884, the gristmill was relocated to the east side of the lake. By this time, all of the outbuildings on the island had burned or had been altered in some way.



This is the Mill area and south outlet as depicted in 1880. The small lake on the SE side is not shown. The two piers at Bradley Mill, one extending into the bay and one along the shoreline, can be seen on the left. They were connected by the time of this drawing.

Spears moved back east in 1885 and a fellow, thought to be named Thompson, operated the mill until 1890. The mill had burned in 1887. It was rebuilt closer to the Lake and burned again in 1891. Frank and George Pankratz bought the mill in 1891 and rebuilt west of the boarding house. The new mill was started in 1892 and put into service in 1893. In 1908 an attempt was made to diversify. Pankratz contracted with Wisconsin

Broom Company to manufacture broom handles. Plans were made to develop other projects as well. The effort failed and the mill was torn down, ceasing business in 1909. The machinery and other equipment were sold to a mill in Menominee, Michigan, in 1910.

By 1869 water levels had fallen to a point that the logs for the mill could not be sluiced into Little Lake. A tramway was built across the island to move the logs from the Bay into the Lake. In early June of 1876 high water had returned. The second causeway was washed out near the gristmill on the island. The six families living on the island used boats to get to the mainland. The causeway was repaired by August of the same year.

A northern passage, north of Spear Mill about 2/3 of the way up, was dredged out in 1878. The south channel was filled in with the dredging to allow easier access for the two Ice Houses constructed by A. O. Guthrie on the southern tip of the island. Two years later Guthrie built a footbridge across the lake to Cedar Street (now Third Avenue). This was located on the southern part of the lake and was where the current road to the bathing beach is located.

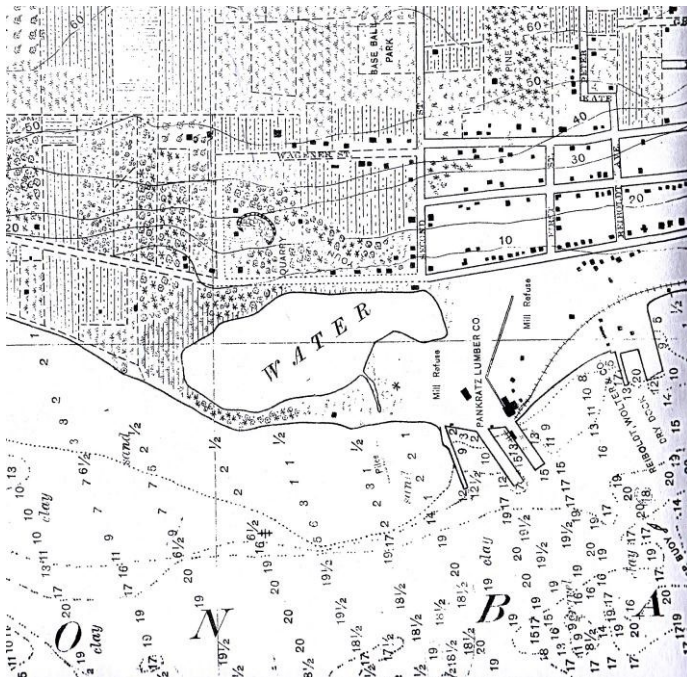
Once the small connecting lake on the southeast of Little Lake and the springs that were located where the two lakes connected were covered, stagnation of the Little Lake occurred. In the winter of 1890-91 it was reported that even if ice skaters fell through the ice they would be hard put to drown because of the shallowness of the lake. Due to the resulting stench and the occurrence of typhoid fever epidemics, on November 26, 1891, the City of Sturgeon Bay ordered the filled in south entrance of the lake to be opened. Water levels in the bay and lake rose due the normal rise and fall of water levels in the Michigan basin. Water levels in the bay and lake fell once again in 1896. The once eight foot deep lake once again became a bog, the southern estuary having closed. With continued filling from the lumberyard and mill, a large portion of what had been Little Lake was now Pankratz Lumberyard. It was estimated that one half of the lake had been filled, including some fill in the far northern parts of the lake as well.

In that year, 1896, Reiboldt-Wolter shipyard docks (In 1918 the yard was sold and renamed Universal Shipyard) docks were constructed, located on a 12-acre tract with 800 feet of shore frontage, purchased from Pankratz Lumberyard. The docks extended from the filled in area that once was the southern estuary. Much work was required to remove old fill, mostly slabs, to provide a bottom for solid fill.

The lumber business was the mainstay of the local economy until the 1890's when shipbuilding and agriculture became more dominant. Shipbuilding was a natural extension of the lumber business. The lumber companies built large and powerful tugs to tow logs from the west side of Green Bay to furnish their mills after the number of logs produced in Door County fell dramatically due to depletion of trees in Door County's forests. Large scows were built to carry the finished lumber to the Milwaukee and Chicago markets. The southern portion of the original island in the region of the Universal shipyard eventually became part of Roen Steamship and Dry Dock. This

dramatically expanded from 1941 to 1945 when all of the remaining buildings from the time of the sawmill were replaced.

Storms had intermittent significant effects on Little Lake. A storm on November 29, 1906, in conjunction with high water, caused wood waste from Little Lake to wash up on the east shore of Sturgeon Bay. By 1913, the south passage from the remaining lake was closed with sand having been pushed in by a strong northwest wind. Sawdust, shingles, etc. had already partially closed the outlet. From this point forward the lake began once again to stagnate. The water level slowly receded and the matter in the lake began to decay.



This map was drawn as a depth chart in 1906. The south end of the lake has been filled in. The obliterated south outlet when initially established was dug “one third of the way up” from the original opening. The piers are part of Pankratz lumber, the final owner of the original mill business started by Lyman Bradley and David Crandall in 1852.

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the city purchased the Lake and 25 acres south of the Lake. Little Lake had become a bog or mud flat that had an offensive odor so foul that homeowners in the area had to keep their windows closed. The nearby bathing beach was being contaminated from run off from the lake area. The ground water in the surrounding areas also became contaminated. Little Lake had essentially no commercial value. The depth of the lake ranged from one foot to four feet. State Representative Frank Graass stepped up to the daunting task of revitalizing Little Lake to its “original” state. It was planned to dredge out the lake and to open a 100-foot south estuary, dredging out into the bay “to a sustainable depth”. The dredgings were to be used to fill

in the low lands, the areas of the two communications of the smaller lake and Little Lake, which were already partially filled. The filled area was planned to be a city park with athletic fields.

MAN RESTORES WHAT MAN DESTROYED---A LAKE



This is a picture of Frank Graass that appeared in The Door County Advocate in 1938. Frank is seen walking in the marshy remains of Little Lake. The “sump dredge” can be seen in the background. The piping used to direct the dredging to the lowland area south of the lake can be seen resting on float barrels behind the dredge.

There were many advantages cited for improving the lake:

- Pollution problems would be solved.
- Less mosquito breeding
- Increased property values around the lake
- Dredging would be used to fill in the lowland areas around the lake creating a beautiful city park
- Creation of a wildlife sanctuary for water fowl and muskrats
- Landscaping to include rustic bridges to the island, public boathouses for canoe rental, ice skating center, and a trout exhibition pond at the southeast end of the lake.

In the 1930's, the area was referred to as the jungle or the dump. Many brought their refuse and dumped it in the area of the partially filled Little Lake. “Hobos” or “tramps”, which came as migrant workers, lived in tents in the area during the summers. They waited there for farmers and orchard growers to come and offer them “pick up work”. By the end of the summers there were piles of refuse left behind. There was a rickety

wooden bridge that crossed the south outlet of the lake to provide access to cottages located on the island. This was the only way one could get to the cottages. The water under the bridge was clear. There was no swimming in the lake, however, because it was infested with bloodsuckers.



This photo of the dredging at Little Lake shows the cottages (behind the dredge) that were located on what remained of the island.

Efforts were begun in 1931 to revitalize the lake. They failed due to the depression. With Frank Graass' leadership, gradual progress was made. A federal government CWA project was instituted in 1934 "to put men to work". 12,000 cubic yards of refuse was removed from the edges of the Lake by "claws and trucks". Low-lying areas south of the lake were filled with the dredgings. WCA having gone out of existence in 1936, Mr. Graass was able to obtain a federal WPA project to do landscaping and improvements at the lake. There were not enough "relief workers" in Door County to go around for these projects, the largest number of workers being assigned to the State Parks. The Little Lake work lagged far behind. In 1937, the Wisconsin Conservation Commission dredged along the edge of the lake and once again opened the south cut to the bay. 110,000 cubic yards were removed and used as more fill for the contiguous low lands. An island was left in the middle, which was marshy and had the appearance of a marsh with several small islands. The odor was gone, but the lake was still unsightly, so the State decided to dredge out the rest of the lake with a suction dredge to a depth of eight feet. The dredgings were piped to the low-lying areas. On May 31, 1938, the dredging was completed and approval was given to remove the bridge at the south estuary in order to

remove the dredge from the lake. A cement bridge replaced the wooden one, once the dredge was removed. Fish rearing ponds were installed on the west side of the lake. In December of that year, the city approved plans to develop an ice rink on the lake in the area of the rearing ponds. In the same month the city deeded the lake to the Wisconsin Department of Conservation. They would have control of the lake as long as they used it for conservation purposes.



Shown here is the lake in 1938 after the lake was dredged. The southwest outlet is open and the rearing ponds have been constructed. The cement bridge over the new outlet was not constructed at the time the picture was taken. The filled parts of the lake are apparent. The docks for the Universal Shipyard are in the area of the original south outlet.

The four 150ft. X 200ft. fishponds were constructed on the west side of the lake. They were quite deep. They were used to raise fathead minnows that would be released into the breeding ponds for the bass and walleye pike, each rose in their own pond. Walleye cannibalize their young. By keeping these minnows in the ponds until the pike were fingerlings figured to solve this problem. To produce bugs to feed the bass and pike fingerlings, carp and other matter were buried under the fourth pond. It was felt that with the extra nutrition due to the bugs, the larger fingerling pike would not be as likely to be cannibalistic. The Lake was drained in 1939 in preparation for stocking the lake and the rearing ponds. A large number of shiners, bullheads and rock bass were removed. A small number of shiner minnows remained. Their presence was felt to be a good food source for the anticipated stocking of small mouth black bass, so they were allowed to remain. A ten-horse motor was installed with electricity at the newly constructed concrete bridge at the south estuary. The pump was used to pump water out of the ponds to lower water levels when necessary. A wire fence was constructed on the west, north and south shores of the lake.

At the time, trout had become expensive. The Mississippi River no longer spawned black bass due to dredging and installation of dams. Due to the past history of abundant bass

and pickerel having populated the Lake, it was decided that the state fish hatchery, located just east of where Peterson Builders was located, would supply fish to stock the Lake with small mouth black bass. The superintendent of the fish hatchery was supervisor of the entire project. Small mouth bass spawn and adults were obtained from Washington Island and Mink River waters.

In August of 1940, an aquarium was built. It was stocked with fish indigenous to Sturgeon Bay and Lake Michigan and maintained by the local state fish hatchery. The city was responsible for providing the water, electricity and lighting. The aquarium was stocked each spring and the fish were released in the fall before emptying the aquarium and preparing it for winter. An example of what could be seen in the aquarium is revealed by the list that the State fishery developed for stocking for 1941: 12 bullheads, 5 dog fish, 20 blue gill, 5 garfish, 25 brown trout, 25 rainbow trout, 25 brook trout and 4 sturgeon. In the same year, the ice skating rink was placed in the area of the recently constructed rearing ponds. The aquarium was filled with dirt in 1971 and it became a flower planter. The Peninsula Planters and Garden Club and the Sturgeon Bay Home and Garden Club were responsible for maintaining the plantings.

During the summer months of 1943 water action at different times caused sand to drift into the Little Lake outlet so that it became totally blocked to passage of water. Sometimes the outlet was cleared with shovels and on other occasions excavating shovels were used. Water levels were high enough that water was pumped out 10 full days and two 1/2 days in October to keep the rearing ponds from overflowing. In 1944 the pump operated 325 hours and in 1945 346 hours.

As a part of the original project, multiple trees of varying species were planted around the lake and lily pods were placed in the lake.



Roen Steamship in winter late 1940's – The yard is expanded from the previous Universal Shipyard. The building dedicated to Frank Graass can be seen on the south side of the road going to the bathing beach. It was built from lumber obtained from the defense home duplexes. The building has been used as an American legion meeting place, a kindergarten, a DMV licensing facility and for little league concessions and storage, The road passing in front of the building is where the foot bridge crossed the south end of Bradley Lake from Guthrie's ice houses. The trees planted around the lake on the bay shore of the park have grown since being planted in 1938.

In December 1941, the jungle, “a popular hangout for tramps” was removed as a part of the local war effort. It was converted to a parking lot for Smith Shipbuilding and Dry Dock.

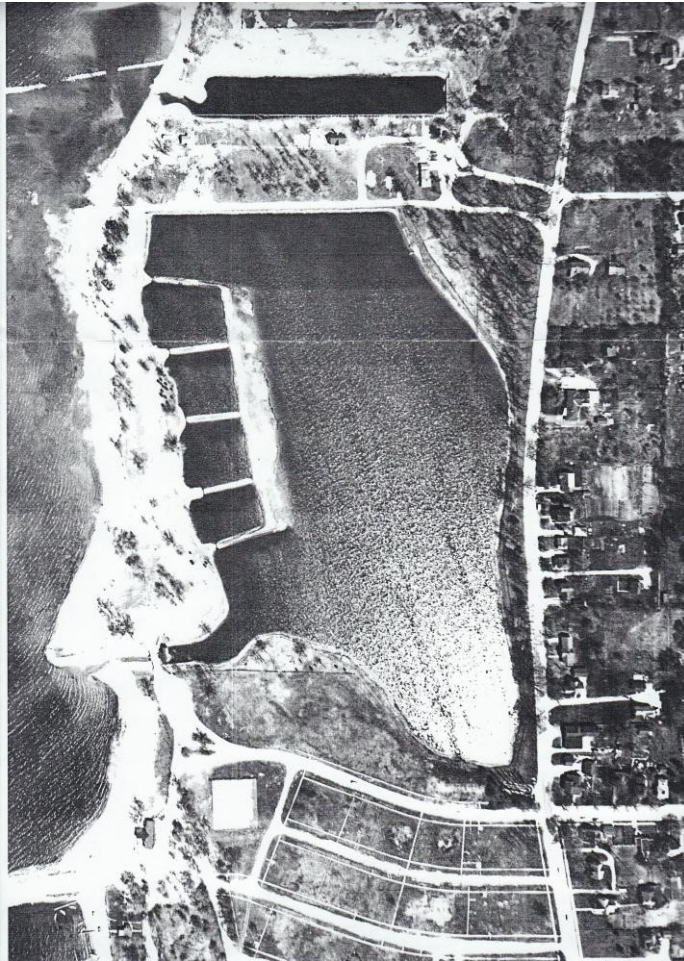
By August 1942, a six dwelling housing unit was constructed for the defense workers who were pouring into the city. In November 1942, row houses were under construction by the Federation of Defense Housing Administration. The area was called Sunset Hill. Macadam streets were constructed and lawns were seeded.



This 1953 photo shows the fence that had been placed around the lake.

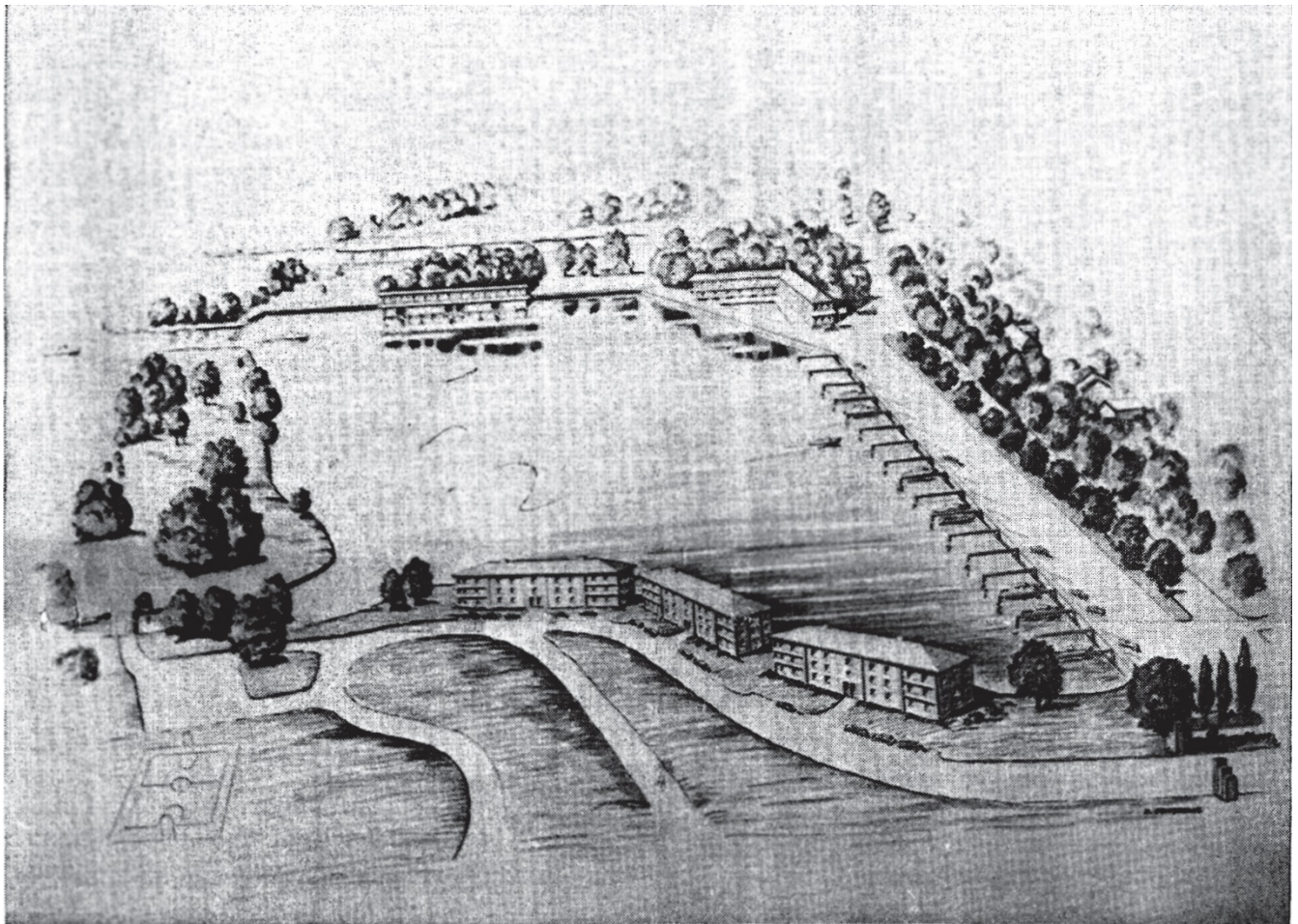
By 1952, the remaining lowland areas were filled and, in 1953, a little league baseball diamond was placed at the southeast end of the new park (at the corner of what is now the intersection of Third Avenue and Florida Street). There are now three little league diamonds in the park sponsored by three Sturgeon Bay service clubs, The Lions Club, the Kiwanis Club, and the Rotary Club. The building is now used as a concession stand during Little League games.

In 1956 the south passage once again required opening to the Bay.



This is a 1957 aerial photo showing the opening on the SW end of the lake that was reopened in 1956. The cement bridge over the outlet can be seen. Bradley Street extending from Delaware Street on the south end of the Lake still goes through showing what at one time was the center of Bradley Lake but is now the southern extent of the lake. The roads were constructed to serve the defense homes, which had been built in the park to house shipyard workers during the Second World War. The buildings are no longer there. On the north, Alabama Street is the border. Some of the north end has been filled in.

A development corporation named Cherryland Investment, LTD, in 1963, proposed buying the lake and park to build a marina with associated condominiums, boathouses with accommodations above, and a motel. This was rejected by the city council after the residents strongly objected on April 18<sup>th</sup>.



—Sketch by Ernest Dombrowe

This is a schematic of the Cherryland Investment proposal that appeared in the Green Bay Press Gazette in April 1963. The condominiums are on the lower part of the picture. On the right are boat slips. The east side of the lake has been filled in to accommodate parking spaces for the slips. Upper right is a 40-unit motel. Upper center shows 12 apartments over boathouses. Upper left is a north passage for boat traffic. Lower left is where the old passage is located. This is opened up and a paddle wheel was to be installed to prevent stagnation in the lake.

In August of that same year, the Door County Rod and Gun Club constructed a building for dispensing corn at ten cents for a filled small paper bag to feed waterfowl at the southeast corner of Little Lake. The children fed the ducks and geese and loaded their fish hooks with corn as well to catch carp. A pump was placed to bubble the water to keep it open in the winter.

Piping was installed in 1964 to create a connection to the Bay “to eliminate the current unsightly condition” of the lake. It extended from the cement bridge on the southwest corner of Little Lake to the Bay. The bridge had been constructed during the 1938

revitalization of the lake. A dam was constructed to keep the Lake level two feet above the water level of the Bay that existed at that time.



This photo was taken in 1967. The road to the bathing beach is where the footbridge built by Guthrie Ice Houses was located. It crossed the south end of the lake. Note that Bradly Street no longer exists. Two little league diamonds are seen south of the bathing beach road. The building dedicated to Frank Graass is located between them.

The feeding of waterfowl at the lake resulted in the growth of a large population center of ducks and geese. By 1984, as a result of the over concentration of the waterfowl, the birds began to die off due to botulism and other ornathoses. Because of this, the feeding of the birds was ordered stopped, the water pump removed, and the corn sales at the site were discontinued. In 1987, the Rod and Gun Club building constructed for storage and sale of corn was sold.



Winter pictures of the waterfowl area at Little Lake. Upper left: January 1964 - The corn dispensing shed is being serviced by Lawrence Virlee. Wooden sheds can be seen which were constructed to house and protect the birds. Upper right: January 1965 - A fenced in area is shown that protected the birds, some of which were tame farm birds. Lower left: January 1965 - Holes were drilled in the ice and Christmas trees were placed to protect the birds from north winds. Lower right: January 1963 - a snow fence was put up to keep people away from the area kept open by the aerator.



Photo of the corn dispensing building as it exists today. It has been modified and is utilized as a machine shed by Dean Gigstead who purchased it from the Door County Rod & Gun Club in 1987.

In conjunction with the construction of a graving dock to accommodate 1,000-foot freighters in the early 1970's at the Bay Shipbuilding shipyard, dredgings were placed in the area of the nearby bathing beach and on the west shore of Little Lake, closing permanently the south waterway to Sturgeon Bay from Little Lake. A culvert was placed at the northwest end of the Lake to allow continued communication with the Bay. It was placed to keep the water level one foot above the water level of the Bay at the time it was placed. A T-shaped peninsula on the west side of the lake was developed in the area of the old fish rearing ponds to function as a breeding area for water fowl.



This aerial photo from 1994 shows the “t-island” for waterfowl nesting and the graving dock for the 1,000-foot freighters. The graving dock crosses the area where the original south outlet of Crystal Lake was located and is where Roen Steamship was located. Although the corn dispensing building is gone, the area of its location and the aquarium is seen on the SE corner of the lake (upper right end of the lake).

In 1984, a fishing tourney was instituted at Little Lake. It has been held annually on Father's Day since. The tourney is for kids. A parent, grandparent or other family member must accompany the child. First place prizes are given for the largest fish caught in each category for that year. In early years prizes were given for large and small mouth bass, northern pike, perch, rock bass, sunfish, carp, bullhead and musky. Through the usual natural cycles, the bay and lake levels rose until the end of the decade.



This is a picture of the annual Father's Day Fishing Derby during its heyday.

Sturgeon Bay and Little Lake water levels subsequently fell through the 1990s and mid-2000s. The north culvert leading to the Bay, placed when the south culvert was sealed, was out of water. It has a valve that was to be used to control the lake's water level. It was closed in 1996 and ceased to be functional. The mean lake depth in 2015 was four feet with a maximum depth of 5.5 feet.

Three storm sewers were directed into the lake sometime in the 1990's, receiving surface water from as far east as 8<sup>th</sup> avenue and bordered on the north by Alabama street and on the south by Florida Street. This is an area of 260 acres with 50 acres being open areas and 210 acres high-density urban area. The furthest south pipe came from Florida Street and was placed in 2006. There are no exact records as to when the other two pipes were placed. The run off resulted in nitrogen and phosphorus levels being far above that of any other lake in Door County. This increased plant growth in summer months that caused the lake to be supersaturated with oxygen due to oxygen production through photosynthesis. Sludge on the bottom of the lake increased at an accelerated rate secondary to decay from the increased plant growth settling to the bottom at the end of the growth season and sludge carried into the lake by the storm sewers. Oxygen content decreased to a level that was not sustainable for fish life during most winter months because of increased utilization of oxygen by the decaying matter at the bottom of the lake and little or no production of oxygen through photosynthesis by plant life.

As a result of decreased fish population, 12,000-hybrid sun fish were planted in the lake in 1994. This did not have a lasting effect. By 2016 only bullheads were caught in the lake. Due to fear that the fish were contaminated by the water in the Lake, most no longer fished the lake. Very few showed up for the father's day fishing event in 2016. The nearby beach at times had been contaminated by e-coli bacteria originating from Little Lake.

Beginning in 2008, the City of Sturgeon Bay held a public hearing to determine what the citizens felt about the future of Little Lake. A Little Lake Citizens group was formed, including the chair of the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay Environmental Protection Committee Roger Anderson. Several meetings were held. The committee, when given the choice of saving the Lake or filling it in, decided in favor of “cleaning up” the Lake. Miller Engineers and Scientists studied the Lake. They confirmed the debilitated state of the Lake. The sediment on the bottom of the Lake was tested. It was determined that material would not present any health hazards for disposal of the material if and when the Lake was dredged. At that time the City was not able to find grant money to resolve the Lake’s problems that were identified.



In 2010 the first step was taken to improve the Lake by clearing brush on the west side of the Lake. The Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay supported the idea and presented the City with a check for \$1,500. The check is presented to Bob Bordeau (left) of the Sturgeon Bay Parks and Recreation Department by Roger Anderson (right) and Greg Meissner (center), co-chairs of the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay Environmental protection Committee.

The Lake continued to deteriorate. It was odiferous and unsightly. A citizen living near the Lake approached Roger Anderson, Co-Chair of the Rotary Club of Surgeon Bay Environmental Protection Committee, in the summer of 2012. He knew that the Club had been active in making the improvements in Sawyer Park. His Hope was that the Club would similarly get involved in improving Little Lake. Roger, along with committee co-chair Greg Meissner, felt this would be a good service project for the committee and the club took up the challenge. The City was also very supportive. They did not have funds in their budget. However it was known that there were potentially grant funds available.

By January of 2013 a Little Lake Citizens group was formed. Membership exceeded 30, many of whom were Rotarians. The group enthusiastically supported revitalization of Little Lake.

By 2014, the City had hired an engineering firm, Foth Infrastructure and Environment. They determined that an engineered wetland should be constructed to cleanse the surface runoff water and water from the storm sewers before it was allowed to enter the Lake. In July of 2014 the City obtained a \$100,000 grant from the Fund for Lake Michigan to support construction of the wetland southeast of the Lake on a portion of Sunset Park. The Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay opened a Little Lake Restoration Fund at the Door County Community Foundation. The Rotary Club raised funds from the community and made their own contribution. A total of \$100,000 was raised. The City budgeted funds for the project and gained additional grants. Rass Excavating completed the \$300,000 wetland in 2016.



Edgings and sawdust from the sawmills that filled in 1/2 of Little Lake in the mid and late 1880s.



The Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay with help from Greg and Marcia Meissner, the Master Gardeners, and community volunteers planted vegetation in and around the three cells of the wetland to cleanse the storm sewer water and surface runoff water before it enters the Lake. In 2017 the storm sewers were diverted into the first cell of the wetland.



Above is an aerial photo of the completed/functioning wetland, the east side of Sunset Park to include the three ball diamonds and the building dedicated to Frank Graass. The building was built from the defense homes that were located south of the remnants of Silver Lake. The old fishpond, now planter, can be seen just southeast of the Lake next to Third Avenue. The entry cell for the storm sewer drainage is located next to Third Avenue – the southernmost cell. About 1/2 of the third cell is on the bottom right. From here the cleansed water seeps through the narrow piece of land between the cell and Little Lake. With the help from the engineered wetland Little Lake will be cured.

At the time of this writing (June 2018) plans are being developed to dredge the Lake to create a sustainable environment for fish and speed up the Lake's recovery process. A third phase is also under discussion to create recreational activity centers around and on the lake and to provide appropriate landscaping. City government, the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay, and the Little Lake Citizens group will continue to collaborate on these projects.

### **Little Lake Chronology**

1852 – Bradley & Crandall purchase Crystal Lake and a few hundred surrounding acres.

1853 – Bradley Mill completed and placed into operation.

1854 – Bradley & Works took over Bradley Mill and named it Burtis & Works Mill. The mill reverted back to Bradley in the fall and renamed Bradley Mill.

1855 – D. H. Burtis built the Middle Mill. A causeway was built crossing the southern part of Crystal Lake.

1856 – Works deeded his 2/3 share of Bradley Mill to Mrs. Bradley.

1857 – The ship pier and the shoreline pier were united into one pier. The national recession resulted in closure of the mill.

1858 – The mill reopened.

1859 – Bradley built a wheat gristmill on the island.

1860 – February 18<sup>th</sup>. Otumba was officially renamed Sturgeon Bay. Lyman Bradley joined the North Military and closed the mill.

1863 – S. D. Clark bought Bradley Mill and placed it back into operation.

1867 – September 12<sup>th</sup> – the causeway was taken out by a storm and a second was built crossing the mid-portion of the lake. As the lake was filled in, this became the southern border of the lake.

1869 – Due to low water levels, logs could not be sluiced into the lake. A tramway was constructed across the island to move the logs from the bay to the lake.

1877 – Clark sold Bradley Mill to brothers George O. and Marshall Spear. The mill was renamed Spears Mill.

1878 – A north passage was dredged out. The dredgings were used to close the south passage to accommodate the Guthrie Ice Houses.

1880 – Bradley's cleared land west of the lake was planted in wheat, oats and potatoes.

1884 – The wheat mill was destroyed by fire and rebuilt on the east side of the lake.

1885 – Spears moved back east and Thompson operated the mill.

1887 – The sawmill was destroyed by fire and rebuilt closer to the lake.

1891 – The sawmill was again burned down. Pankratz bought the business and rebuilt west of the boarding house.

1896 - A south outlet was opened. About ½ of Little Lake was now filled and much of the south part of Little Lake was now Pankratz Lumber Yard. The Universal Shipyard piers were constructed in the area of the original south estuary.

1906 – November 29<sup>th</sup> – Wood waste from Little Lake washed up on the east shore of Sturgeon Bay due to high water and high winds.

1909 – The sawmill was torn down and ceased operations.

1913 – A strong nor'wester closed the south estuary.

1929 – November 5<sup>th</sup> – The City of Sturgeon Bay purchased Little Lake and 25 acres of land predominately to the south, the areas of previously filled in Crystal Lake and the two connecting little lakes.

1931 – The attempts to revitalize Little Lake began.

1934 – The CWA Project started.

1936 – The WPA project began.

1937 – The Wisconsin Conservation Department began work on the lake.

1938 – May 31<sup>st</sup> – The dredging of the lake was completed, the dredge was removed and a cement bridge over the outlet to the bay was constructed. The fish rearing ponds were built and a protective fence was placed around the lake. An aquarium was built just off of the southeast corner of the lake. A skating rink was operated in the area of the rearing ponds that winter. The lake was deeded to the Wisconsin State Department of Conservation for as long as they would use it for conservation purposes. A pump was placed into operation at the cement bridge. This was used to keep the water low enough so that the rearing ponds would not over flow.

1943 – The outlet to the bay needed to be cleared of sand on several occasions after having washed in by “water action”.

1952 – The filling of the lowlands south of Little Lake was completed.

1953 – The first Little League ball diamond was placed at the corner of Florida and Third Avenue. A building was constructed and dedicated to Frank Graass.

1956 – The south outlet was once again re-opened.

1963 – A proposal for commercial development of the lake and park area was rejected by the City Council.

1963 – The Door County Rod and Gun Club began dispensing small bags of corn at 10 cents/bag to feed the water Fowl.

1971 – The aquarium was filled with dirt and became a flower planter.

Early – mid 1970's – The shoreline of the bay along the bathing beach and the west shoreline of Little Lake were modified with dredgings as a result of construction of a large graving dock at Bay Shipbuilding. The south outlet to the bay was closed. A pipe at the northeast end remained open. (It is believed that this culvert was placed with the revitalization project ending in 1938.) A "T-island" was constructed in the area of the old rearing ponds, to be used as a nesting area for waterfowl.

1984 – Dispensing of corn to feed the waterfowl was discontinued.

1985 – The Fathers' Day Fish Derby started.

1987 – The metal building used to dispense corn was sold to Dean Gigstead for use as a machine shed.

1996 – It has been known that at least since this time, the valve system in the northeast culvert to the lake has been closed and non-functional.

2006 – The last 100 feet of fencing was removed.

2008 – The City of Sturgeon Bay, The Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay, and the Little Lake Citizens group began planning for restoration of Little Lake. Miller Engineers and Scientists submitted their engineering studies and recommendations.

2010 – Brush was cleared from the west side of the Lake with support from The Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay.

2013 – The Little Lake Citizens Group strongly supported the revitalization of Little Lake.

2016 - 17 – The Wetland was constructed and plantings were installed.

2017 – Storm sewer water was diverted to the wetland.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The following people and organizations made contributions to the development of The History of Little Lake:

Roger Anderson  
Nathan Drager  
John Asher  
Robert Bordeau  
Constance Carr  
Door County Advocate  
George Evenson  
Dean Gigstead  
Jan Gigstead  
Marie Greisen  
Ann Jenkins  
Sally Triechel  
Thomas Murphy  
Gary and Cheryl Nault  
Martin Olejniczak  
Sturgeon Bay library  
Richard ("Biz") Virlee (photos by his father Lawrence Virlee)  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Mary Gansberg  
David Boyarski

Username:

Password:



MEETING SITE ADDRESS

600 Nautical Dr, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235  
We meet every Thursday  
Doors open: 11:30 am  
Program: 12:15 pm to 1:15 pm

- Home
- About Our Club
- What Is Rotary?
- Get Involved
- Calendar
- Service Blog

LITTLE LAKE RESTORATION PROJECT

A Ten Year Service Project in the Making

Brief Summary  
Written by Roger Anderson

The Restoration of Little Lake has been a cooperative effort by the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay, the City of Sturgeon Bay, and the Door County Community Foundation. The following is a brief history of our club’s efforts to restore Little Lake.

In 1852, Little Lake was called Crystal Lake or Silver Lake. It was a beautiful lake extending south from its present location to what is now the main entrance to Bay Shipbuilding at 3rd Avenue and Georgia Street. As waste from two nearby sawmills was dumped into the lake, the lake became much smaller, and its name was changed to Bradley Lake or Slab Lake. Most people know it as Little Lake or the ‘duck pond’. Dr. John Herlache covered this in more detail in the “History of Little Lake” that he researched and wrote in 2012. There is a link to the “History of Little Lake” on our Rotary website, and it is 28 pages of very interesting reading.

READ THE FULL HISTORY OF LITTLE LAKE

In the summer of 2008, the city asked for input from the public to help decide what to do with Little Lake. I represented Rotary at several meetings of the Little Lake Citizens Group, and when we were asked if Little Lake should be ‘cleaned up’ or ‘filled in’, the group felt it should be cleaned up, and we wanted to work with the city to help get it done.

IMPACT STARTS



BECOME A HOST



RECENT POSTS

RCOSB on My Journey Away  
Do it with Ralu NOW – Invite A Person You Know  
President’s Welcome





A report prepared for the city by Miller Engineers & Scientists in the fall of 2008 summarized the problems with the lake as follows: Bradley Lake is a 20 acre lake which is heavily

influenced by the street runoff from a 260 acre watershed that empties directly into the lake. The lake is highly eutrophic, or rich in nutrients, with excessive algae growth.

Invasive vegetation and poor water quality result from the shallow water depth, high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, and low dissolved oxygen levels in the winter. The shallow water depth and the low dissolved oxygen levels prevent desirable fish from surviving through the winter.

It was also determined that many feet of sediment cover much of the lake bottom. Fortunately, when the sediment was tested, no ‘red flags’ were found, and disposal of the sludge when the lake is dredged should not be a problem. Unfortunately, Municipal Services Director, Bob Bordeau, was not able to find grant money to fix the problems mentioned in this report.

In the spring of 2010, Greg Meissner and I presented Bob with a check from Rotary for \$1,500 to help clear brush on the west side of the lake.



In the summer of 2012, I received a call from a good friend from high school who lives near Little Lake asking if Rotary could do something about the lake. Keith said the lake looked terrible and even smelled bad. He knew our Rotary club had been working to improve Sawyer Park, and he was

CATEGORIES

Service

SEARCH

Search



hoping we could also do something to improve Little Lake. I called Greg and we decided this would be an interesting project for the Environmental Protection Committee, which Greg and I co-chair. More importantly, we felt it was a way for Rotary to 'give something back to the community'. Although the city was very supportive of the project, they did not have money budgeted for Little Lake. Fortunately, we learned that grant money might again be available for lake restoration projects.



In January of 2013, almost 30 people, many of them Rotarians, met and enthusiastically supported the Restoration of Little Lake.

By February of 2014, the city was working with Foth

Infrastructure and Environment, and they determined an Engineered Wetland should be built south of Little Lake in Sunset Park to filter and clean the street runoff, or storm water, before it entered the lake.

The city began aggressively applying for grant money, and in July of 2014 received a check for \$100,000 from the Fund for Lake Michigan to construct the wetland. A Little Lake Restoration Fund was set up at the Door County Community Foundation, and a successful fundraising campaign chaired by Dr. John Herlache, as well as generous donations from Rotary and individual Rotarians, raised almost \$100,000 for the Little Lake Project. Brian Hinrichs from Foth told us he had never worked on a project where the stakeholders, in this case Rotary, had provided so much financial support for the project.

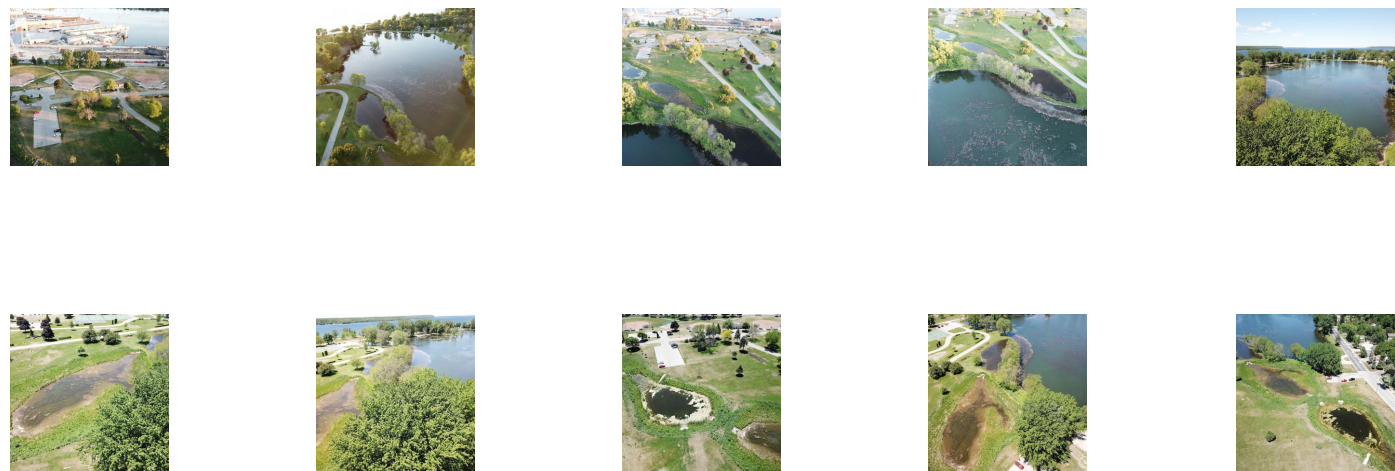
The city also budgeted money for Little Lake and secured additional grant money, enabling work to begin in 2015 on the First Phase of the project, the construction of a \$300,000 Engineered Wetland. Rass Excavating has completed the Engineered Wetland, and our Rotary club, with help from Greg and Marsha Meissner, the Master Gardeners, and volunteers from the community planted the required vegetation in and around the three cells which are now filtering the storm water before it empties into Little Lake. Because the water levels in Lake Michigan, the Bay of Sturgeon Bay and Little Lake are so high right now, the water in Little Lake actually looks quite good. In the future, when the water level in Little Lake goes down, the

Engineered Wetland will continue to help keep the storm water that flows into Little Lake free of contaminants.

**LITTLE LAKE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY**

Aerial Photography Credit: Rotarian – Nathan Drager, Owner, **Quantum PC Services**

Click on the first image to expand the aerial photography gallery.

























In the Second Phase of the project, Foth is recommending a channel be dug to connect the lake to the bay so dredging equipment can remove both soft and hard sediment to deepen the lake and improve the fish habitat in the lake. Barges would be loaded in the lake and material transported to property owned by Sturgeon Bay Utilities on Barge Road near the canal. If the \$3.5 to \$4 million for this project cannot be raised, a less expensive alternative would be to use a suction dredge to just remove up to seven feet of soft sediment that covers some parts of the lake bottom. It was estimated that using a suction dredge to remove approximately 55,000 cubic yards of soft sediment would cost around \$1.5 million. The amount of grant money available will determine if and how the lake will be dredged.

During the Third Phase of the Little Lake Restoration Project,

improvements to the lake may include a launch area for canoes, kayaks, and paddle boats, a fishing pier, walking paths with informational kiosks explaining the wetland, and possibly an ice skating rink.

The city is also looking at future improvements to Sunset Park. At meetings in the fall of 2017 and again in March of 2018, the city asked for input from the public to help decide what improvements should be made to the park. A complete upgrade to just Sunset Park could cost up to \$5 million, but the project may have to be scaled back depending on the amount of grant money available.

We feel the Restoration of Little Lake is a very worthwhile project for our Rotary Club. Someday we hope to add a chapter to Dr. Herlache’s “History of Little Lake” covering the restoration of the lake.

Greg has selected pictures that help explain the restoration project. These pictures are included on this website and show the First Phase of the project.

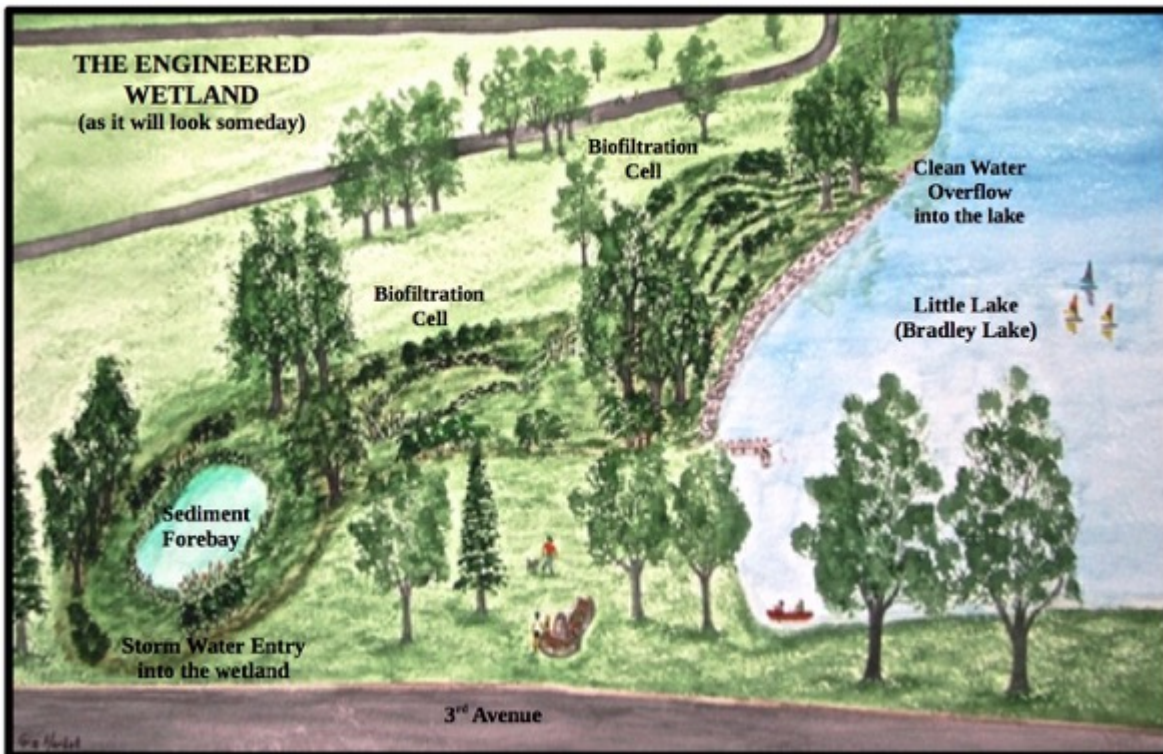
**LITTLE LAKE RESTORATION GALLERY**

Click on the first image to expand the photography gallery.

# Restoring Little Lake

By [Alyssa Skiba](#), [Peninsula Pulse](#) – July 14th, 2016

- [fShare](#)
- [Tweet](#)
- [Pin](#)
- [g+Share](#)
- [inLinkedIn](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [Email](#)



In the mid-19th century, Sturgeon Bay's Little Lake (also known as Bradley Lake) was known as Crystal Lake, a tribute to the clear, spring-fed water within it. Its shores, which extended from Alabama Street to Georgia Street, were home to pine trees and its water flourished with a variety of fish.

When the area was discovered in 1852 by loggers from New York, it would mark the beginning of Sturgeon Bay's logging and lumber industry and the end of the lake's pristine days. During the following decades, it would become the dumping ground for a sawmill built on its west end, and its two attached lakes, one each on the north and southeast ends, would be filled in with sawdust and other sawmill refuse. A much smaller and heavily polluted Crystal Lake would become Bradley

Lake, named after the Bradley Mill on the lake's west end, and eventually Little Lake.

Over the course of the next century-and-a-half, the lake would undergo significant changes, including shifting water levels, continued filling from lumberyards and the mill, and in 1929, purchase by the city. By that time, it had become a bog that contaminated a nearby beach and groundwater. It would also see a number of failed attempts at revitalization, including through the Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration (the Great Depression-era work programs) and the Wisconsin Conservation Commission.

Now, 165 years later, work on an ambitious three-phase restoration project of the 20-acre Little Lake is underway thanks to a partnership between the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay, City of Sturgeon Bay and the Door County Community Foundation.

According to a 2008 report by Miller Engineers & Scientists, a majority of the lake's issues stem from its location as the endpoint for street runoff from a 260-acre watershed. As a result, it has high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, which have depleted its oxygen levels, preventing desirable fish from surviving through winters. Its nutrient-rich quality has also resulted in excessive algae growth and invasive vegetation.

The first plan of action is to remove the phosphorus that's been building up for a number of years through construction of an engineered wetland south of Little Lake in Sunset Park. The stormwater runoff from the watershed will be diverted into the engineered wetland, which will act similar to a septic system, as explained by Greg Meissner, co-chair of the Rotary's Environmental Protection Committee and owner of Meissner Landscape, Inc.

"An engineered wetland is sort of like a septic system," Meissner said. "The water goes through a couple settling points where most of the material, any suspended material settles out and then it goes into a third cell much like your septic tank would. The first one takes out most of the solids, the second takes out a bit more and then the third area would be the drain field; it pumps it out into a drain field and then it seeps through the soil and cleanses the water even more. An engineered wetland is sort of like a surface model of that."

Last summer, the city's Finance Committee approved a \$292,000 bid from Rass Excavating and Materials to begin phase one of the project, construction of the engineered wetland. The Rotary Club has raised \$100,000 for the first phase and in 2014, the city received \$100,000 from the Fund for Lake Michigan to support the project.

“Once they start a project like they have with us and Little Lake, they will continue to fund it until its completion,” said Roger Anderson, co-chair of the Rotary’s Environmental Protection Committee.

This summer, the Rotary Club has planted eight different types of shrubs and trees and 13 varieties of native emergent plants around the three cells of the wetland that will naturally filter the water before it enters Little Lake. Planting by two of the three tiers of the wetland is expected to be finished by the winter.

Phase two of the project is dredging of the lake, which could cost anywhere between \$1.5 and \$3 million. Bob Bordeaux, city parks and recreation director, said they will begin writing grants in 2017 for phase two but dredging of the lake is likely two years away.

The third phase will begin with public input to determine what public amenities to include once the project is completed.

“We have to have a plan for the entire park which will encompass Little Lake because it’s such a part of Sunset Park that any plan we had for the park would be almost obsolete once we redid the lake because it would be really such a large part of the park,” said Mayor Thad Birmingham. “We have to figure that out.”

Volunteers are needed on Saturday, July 16 to plant approximately 1,000 emergent plant plugs in the middle cell of the engineered wetland. Work will begin at 8 am. Those interested should meet at the Sunset Park parking lot at the end of Delaware Street and bring boots and a trowel.

## Related Organizations



- 

[Door County Community Foundation](#)



-