

Lake Front Connections



Goal

To improve pedestrian connections to the Lakefront

Objectives

- Increase pedestrian linkages between Downtown and the Lakefront.
- Design for the expansion and a new street edge for the Henry W. Maier Festival grounds.
- Create a continuous Lake Walk that connects to the RiverWalk.
- Implement the North Harbor Tract Plan.
- Extend the Third Ward the street grid to connect to the Lakefront, where possible.
- Provide greater access to the SummerFest playground.

Benefits

- Increases Lakefront utilization.
- Improves image of the Lakefront.
- Stimulates continued redevelopment of Third Ward.
- Integrates thoughtful expansion of the festival grounds and the design of a permanent well designed edge.
- Enhances Third Ward residential and employment opportunities.
- Increased accessible open space.

Responsible Parties

- Milwaukee Art Museum
- Milwaukee County
- Milwaukee World Festivals, Inc.
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- City of Milwaukee
 - Board of Harbor Commissioners
 - Department of City Development
 - Department of Public Works

Rationale

The Lake is Downtown's most dramatic physical feature. It provides extensive recreational opportunities. The Plan recommends that pedestrian connections to the Lake be expanded to more fully utilize this asset.

Milwaukee's Lake front is undergoing dynamic transformations. Expansion of the Milwaukee County Art Museum focuses national and international attention on the Lakefront. An immediate repercussion from the Museum can be seen in the State sponsored plan for Lake Shore Tract Park. The Harbor Plan recommends reconfiguration of the island, a redesign of the pier, and a marina for transient boats. These two projects will increase Lakefront activity. Increased pedestrian connections will contribute to the success of this redevelopment.

Recommendations

At the northern end of Downtown, the bluff and existing development preclude numerous access points. However, projects like Lake Bluff Apartments have provided an important civic contribution through the installation of a path down the bluff. Other opportunities must be sought.

In the Third Ward the flat terrain provides more opportunities for connections. To fully utilize this opportunity, however, two impediments must be considered: street discontinuities and SummerFest. While SummerFest is an important tourist destination, it creates a significant impediment to Lake access for the general public. The Third Ward street grid must also be reconnected to ease and encourage pedestrian travel to the Lake.

The plan recommends that a pedestrian extension of Chicago Street connect to the





Lake. This access point should be available to pedestrians year round, except for Summerfest and Ethnic Festival days. To further encourage pedestrian activity the fence defining Summerfest's boundary should contribute to the creation of a positive pedestrian realm.

Current efforts to reconfigure the physical grounds of Summerfest provide an opportunity to create a more dynamic and attractive public open space. The Henry Maier Festival grounds contain an extensive playground feature accessible only during the Festival season. The Plan recommends that an effort be made to make this playground facility accessible year round.

Reinstating the Third Ward street grid will increase pedestrian activity. This will alert people to the redevelopment potential of surface parking lots in the Third Ward. Mixed-use redevelopment will, in turn, augment the pedestrian experience. New parking strategies—shuttles and Park Once—will manage existing and future parking needs. The Plan recommends that future parking be accommodated in the proposed decks and on-street.

The Plan recommends that the pedestrian network connect the RiverWalk and Lake Walk. The RiverWalk should continue east from the Young Street Bridge, at the lighthouse corner it would transform to the Lake Walk.

