

PARK 562

VAN VLISSINGEN PRAIRIE / MARIAN BYRNES NATURAL AREA FRAMEWORK PLAN

MARCH 2016



Chicago Park District



Altamanu Inc.
Landscape Architecture
Urban Design
Planning



V3
Civil & Environmental Engineers
Ecologists

FOREWORD

What is a park framework plan?

The purpose of a Park Framework Plan is to present a long-term vision for the park that responds to diverse neighborhood needs as well as the historic context of the park.

The plan provides a vision for improvements to the park over time and serves as a planning tool for both the community and the Park District. The plan outlines priorities and ensures that improvements are done in a coordinated and holistic manner. The plan is consulted as capital funding becomes available.

Project Goals

Develop the site, Park 562, into an asset for the local community, the city, and the surrounding region via the following cornerstones:

1. Ecological restoration - reestablish and enhance the degraded natural systems existent on site, reintroduce absent native flora, and restore habitat for fauna.
2. Engage people with nature through play, recreation, art, and education.



November 2014 community meeting



Early restoration work on site



2015 field visit with stakeholders



Existing woodland



Existing prairie



Existing wetlands
Photos from 2015 field visits

Park 562 with the bordering train yard in the foreground, the Jeffery Manor neighborhood behind it, and downtown Chicago on the horizon.
2015



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View of existing woodland and vernal pools



View from the mounds on the north end of the site across the wetlands



View of wetlands, ComEd access road, and bordering train line
Photos from 2015 field visits

01.00

VAN VLISSINGEN PRAIRIE

INTRODUCTION & EXISTING CONDITIONS

01.01

INTRODUCTION

01.02

ESTABLISHING REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

01.03

FINDING THE SITE

01.04

SITE HISTORY

01.05

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

Park 562 (aka Van Vliissingen Prairie or the Marian R. Byrnes Natural Area) is a 135-acre site that is to become a natural area located on Chicago's South Side. The park will be a resource to the neighborhood and a regional destination with newfound access to visitors of all backgrounds. Access to a large nature space such as this one is rare within Chicago's built environment and presents wonderful opportunities.

Park 562 will be a place for habitat preservation and restoration and nature-based recreation. Connecting people to nature within Chicago is essential for human health while also protecting and improving the plants, animals, and processes that help make the city a vibrant, healthy place to live. Plans for the site respects the history of this site and will help to provide and preserve a landscape rich in biodiversity and habitat as part of a legacy to future generations.

The park will also encourage a healthy lifestyle with active recreation in nature; walking and cycling on multi-use paths, nature-based adventure grounds for children, a sled hill, and other amenities. We hope that this focus on restoring nature to the city will help to remind people that nature thrives along with people in the city.

The site was once part of a greater Lake Calumet wetland system. Urban and industrial development arrived to the surrounding area in the mid to late 19th century bringing along with it steel mills, the railroad, and new residential neighborhoods.

The site was left, for the most part, undeveloped as a buffer between the railroad and the adjacent Jeffery Manor neighborhood. Slag, a waste byproduct from Chicago's steel mills, was dumped off the rail lines across large tracts of the western half of the site resulting in extremely atypical and difficult growing conditions those conditions.

The site now contains wetlands in the areas covered by slag, and degraded woodlands with seasonal pools. For those familiar with and living nearby, the site possesses some of the most precious open space and natural habitat on Chicago's south side.

Approach

Park 562 was among the first lands acquired by the City as part of the Calumet Initiative to preserve 3,900 acres of open land in the Calumet Reserve.

The Chicago Park District has already begun the process of implementing the vision of restoring this site to ecological health by removing dense thickets of invasive shrubs in the woodlands and tall, invasive grasses in the wetlands. The removal of these plants is the first step of ecological restoration, and will be followed with seeding and planting of native plants to take their place.

Trails and paths will be constructed and will take park visitors through the enhanced and restored woodlands along the eastern edge, leading to open areas of savanna, marsh, wet prairie and short grass prairie along the western edge.

Visitors will discover site-specific art works and exhibits set into the landscape placed to surprise and delight. Future art works will serve to enhance our understanding of the environment and illustrate our relationship to the land and its multiple transformations.

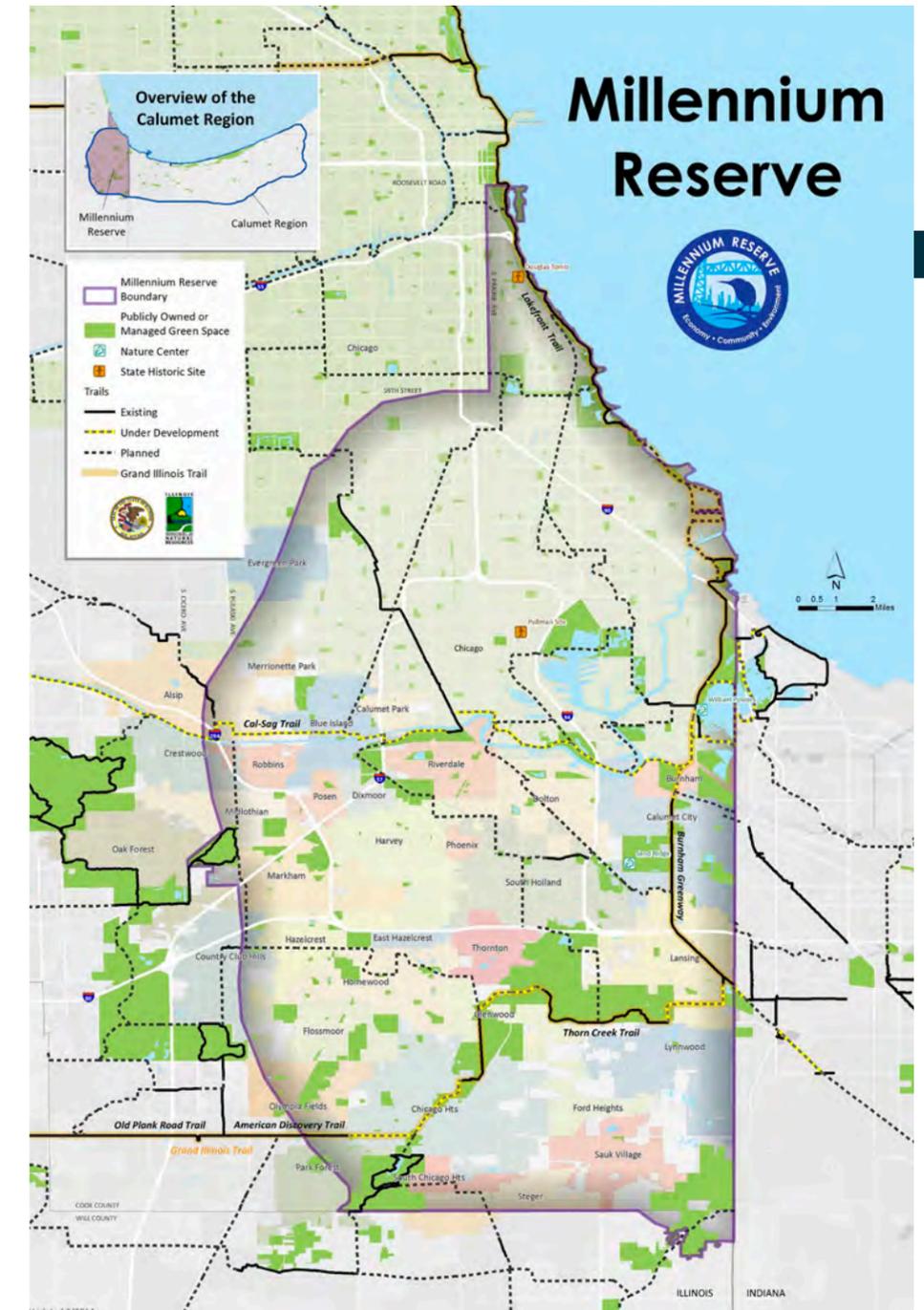
Establishing Regional Connections

Park 562 is one of many regional open spaces in the southeast Chicago and Calumet region. Connectivity between these spaces is a critical aspect to their unified success – both in the form of trails for human use, and greenway corridors allowing wildlife to safely cross wider tracts of land without the risks posed by roadways and industrial areas. Establishing future connections from Park 562 to other open spaces like Big Marsh, Indian Ridge Marsh, and Hegewisch Marsh will be a key priority for the Park District.

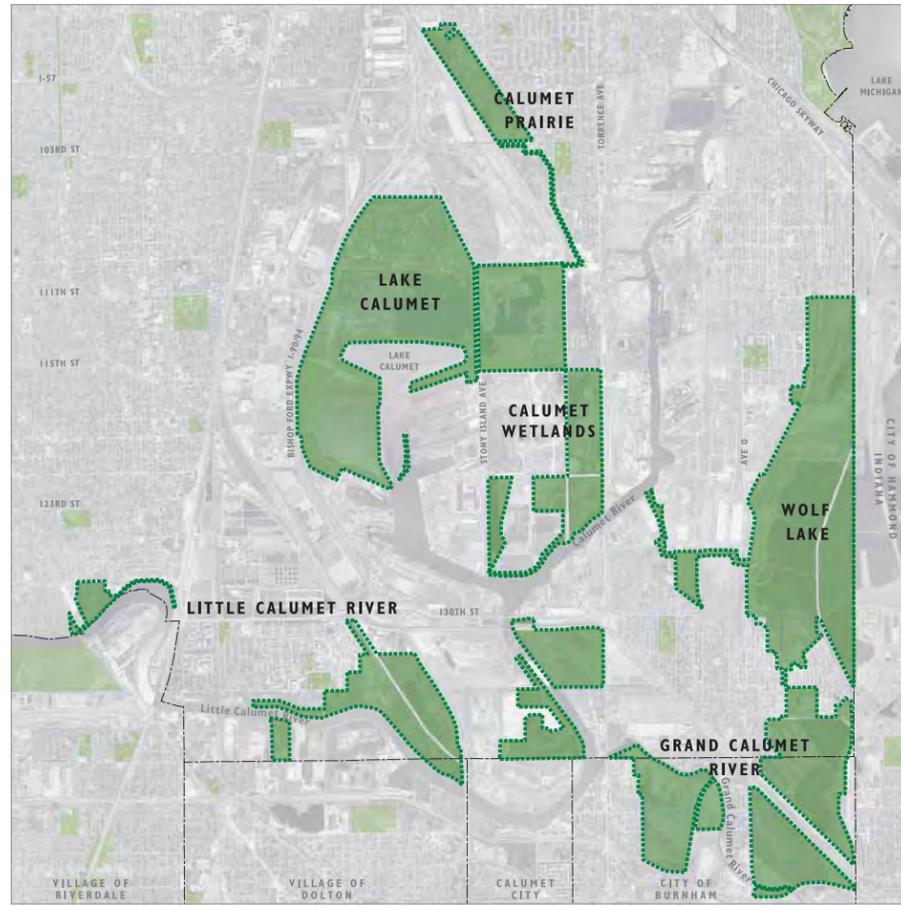
Park 562 is an important site in relation to both the Millennium Reserve and the Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan.

The Millennium Reserve is a partnership of government, businesses, and nonprofit groups working together to advance a shared action agenda in the Calumet and southeast Chicago lakefront areas - 210 square miles in all. It aims to honor the area's cultural and industrial past, restore and enhance the natural ecosystems, support healthy and prosperous communities and residents, and stimulate vigorous and sustainable economic growth.

The Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan is a guide to the protection of 3,900 acres of natural habitat in the Calumet area. The plan highlights local wildlife and important natural resources while providing guidelines for the acquisition by public agencies and strategies for their continued evolution.



Map of the Millennium Reserve open spaces and connections



LAND MANAGEMENT
 ■ COSR Management Units
 ■ Other Open Space
 ▭ Municipal Boundaries

Map of the Calumet Open Space Reserve - Park 562 is noted as the 'Calumet Prairie'



View below the 103rd Street Bridge - a potential connection to the open spaces that lie south

Park 562



Big Marsh



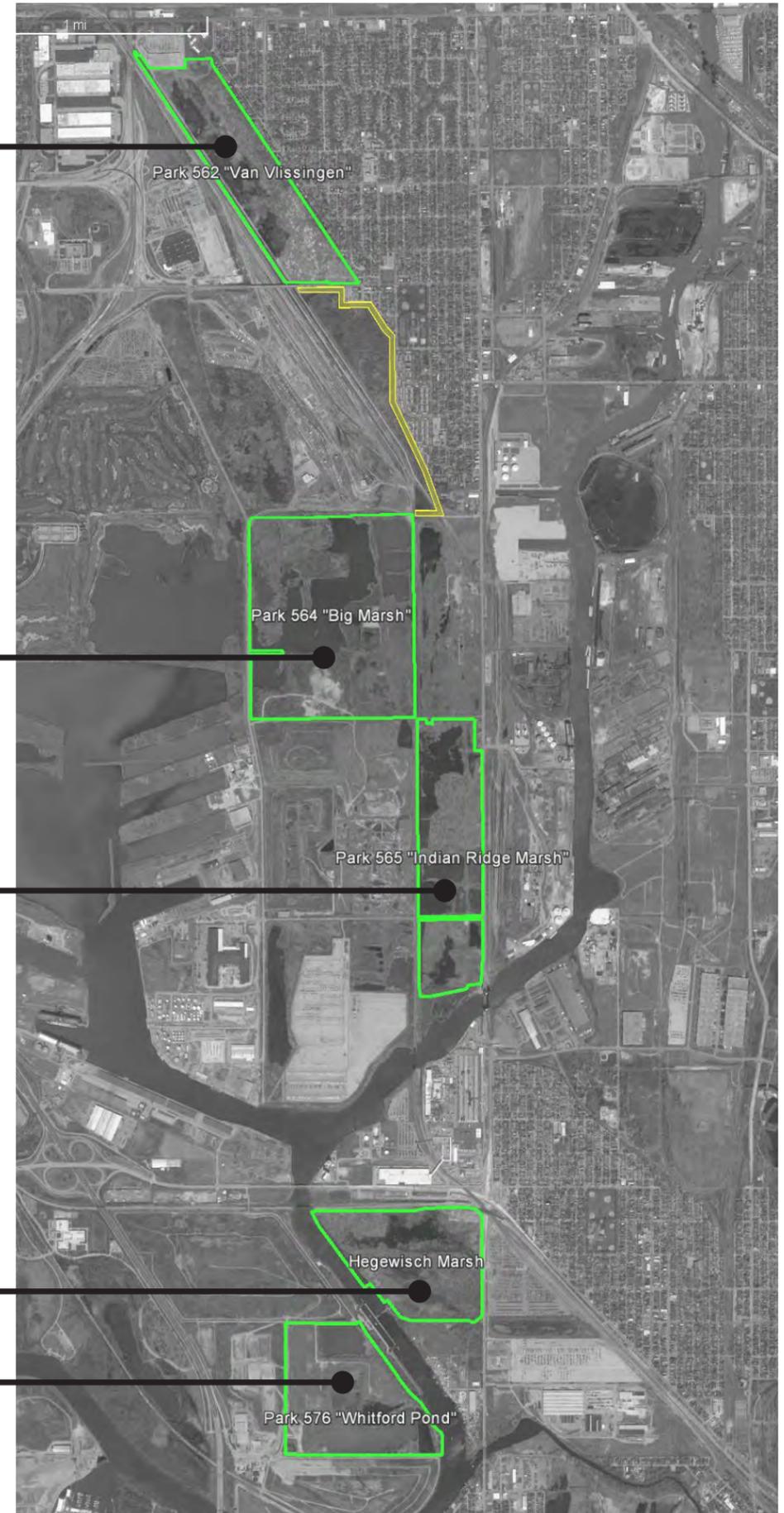
Indian Ridge Marsh



Hegewisch Marsh

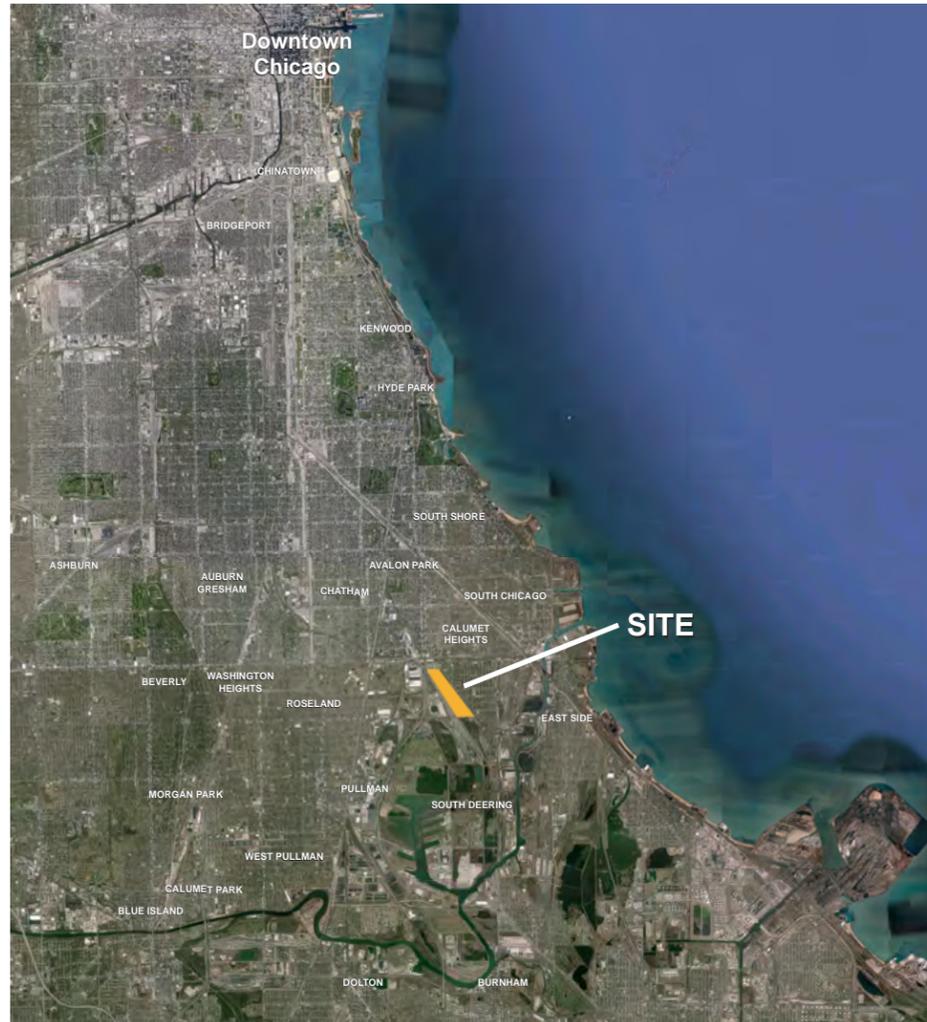


Whitford Pond



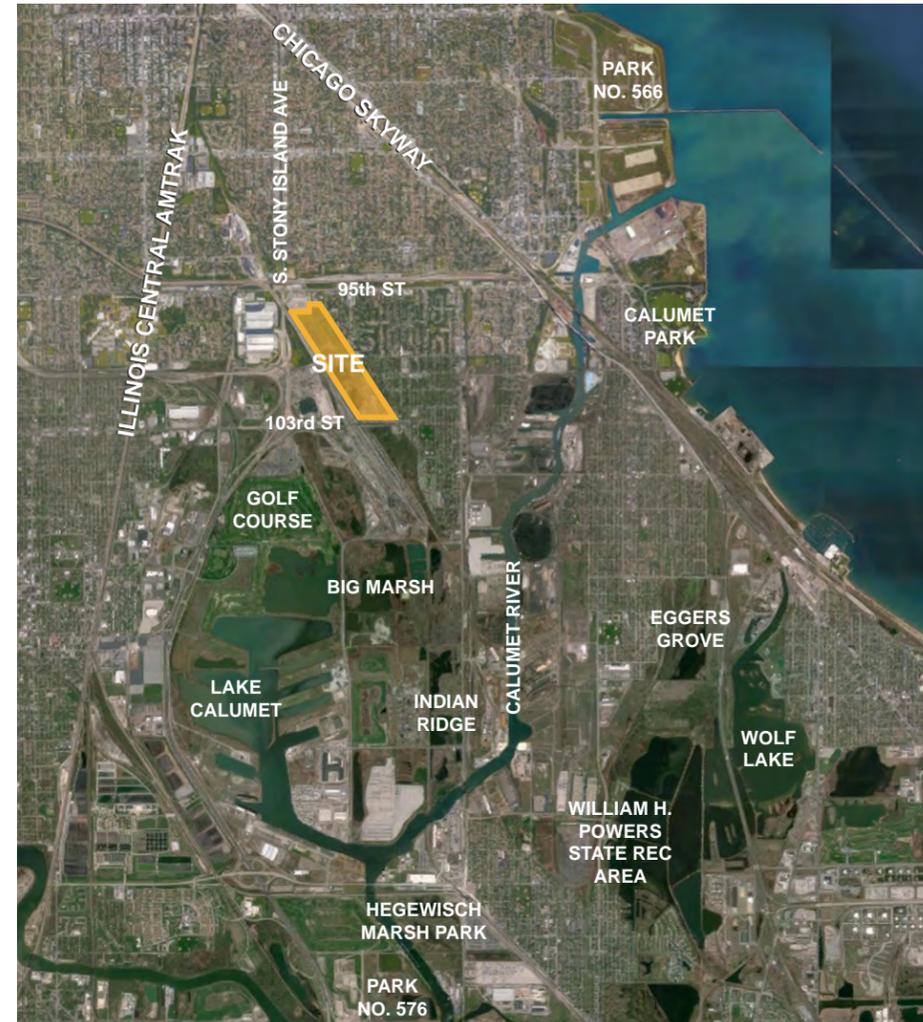
Map of the potential north-south connections between Park 562, Big Marsh, Indian Ridge Marsh, Hegewisch Marsh, & Whitford Pond

Finding the Site



In relation to downtown Chicago

- Park 562 is +/- 17 miles from the loop
- From the loop, it can be reached by car via I-90 or I-94 (approximately 30-45 minutes)
- By bus, it can be reached via the J14 line (approximately 45-60 minutes)



In relation to the greater neighborhood context

- Park 562 sits near the northern end of the Calumet Reserve Properties with Lake Calumet to the south and Big Marsh (Park 564) directly east of the lake
- Many significant roadways and railroads traverse the greater area
- Potential to connect to other green spaces



In relation to the immediate neighborhood

- West edge - the Canadian Pacific Railway
- North edge - a commercial development on 95th St.
- South edge - the site is bordered by 103rd St. which raises over the railway
- East edge - the site is bordered by an alley to S. Van Vlissingen Rd. The Jeffrey Manor neighborhood sits beyond and includes a nearby police station, high school, and Trumbull Park (across 103rd St.)

Site History

Industrial Legacy

While the site, its immediate surroundings, and the Calumet region is generally defined for most outsiders by its steel mills, landfills, railroads, refineries, and factories, many of these features are now aged or abandoned. However, the region also has a rich geologic and ecological history. The area now referred to as Park 562 was once a part of the greater Lake Calumet wetland system. The site today reflects much of the history of the nearby steel industry and residential development but unfortunately only very little of what would have been its natural condition.

With the growth of the steel industry on Chicago's southeast side came railroads which carried and dumped slag, a by-product waste of the steel mills, throughout much of the regional landscape, including what is now Park 562. An aerial photograph from 1938 shows the full site and its surroundings, including the very early construction and layout of the adjacent Jeffery Manor residential neighborhood.

The limits of slag can be seen as a bright white area devoid of any vegetation on the west half of the site. These slag areas now correspond to present day open water, marsh, and wet prairie. The east half of the site also appears to have been cleared of vegetation but left free of slag and these areas have filled in with woody vegetation over time. Through the years, a great deal of construction debris has been dumped along the

eastern edge of the site. This has resulted in a wooded area with unique elevation changes with the presence of temporary pools of water, and mounds of debris.

Despite the significant changes in the landscape due to development, to those who know and live in the area, the site still contains some of the most precious potential and remnant habitat in the Chicagoland area.

“It’s not only their home but also a distinctive ecosystem, with flocks of migrating birds, rare plants, shady woodlands, small prairies, streams, lakes and vibrant marshes that survived despite -- or in rare cases, even because of -- its industrial history.”

Chicago Tribune



1938 aerial



Present day aerial

Jeffery Manor

The site was previously the property of the Beltway Railroad Corporation until 2002. During this extended period of time it served as an undeveloped buffer between the railroad and the Jeffery Manor neighborhood which abuts its eastern edge. When the steel mills of the area operated, this area was predominantly Jewish and populated by WWII veterans purchasing their first house. “The Manor” has several features unusual to other parts of Chicago including streets with curves, streets with complete loops, and many duplexes and single-family homes that give it a distinctly suburban feel. Over time, but particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it transformed into a predominantly African American neighborhood.

Park 562, also known as Van Vlissingen Prairie, or the “The Prairie” as it’s been called for short, has long been an important open space to the neighborhood throughout its history. During community meetings we heard many community members reminiscence over exploring the prairie, ice-skating on the ponds, playing on the ball field that once occupied the southeast corner of the site, and many other outdoor activities that took place here.

Marian R. Byrnes

The preservation of “The Prairie” as an open space is largely thanks to effort work of the late Marian Byrnes. Marian worked tirelessly for over 25 years to preserve this open space. A teacher turned

community organizer, Byrnes was a fixture for more than two decades at virtually any event having to do with the environment of the Southeast Side. She brought together a diverse coalition to preserve the “prairie in front of her house”.

In December 1979, Byrnes discovered that the Chicago Transit Authority was planning to build a bus garage over half of the prairie. She organized her neighbors into the Committee to Protect the Prairie and blocked construction of the garage, saving the prairie.

When the City of Chicago, Chicago Park District and Department of Natural Resources of the State of Illinois began their Calumet Initiative to preserve 3,900 acres of open land, among the first lands acquired was Byrnes’ beloved Van Vlissingen prairie. A portion of the site was later renamed the Marian R. Byrnes Natural Area on her behalf in 2003 by the then Department of Environment, Department of Planning & Development, Southeast Environmental Task Force, and the Calumet Ecological Park Association.

Site Acquisition to Present Day

In 2002 the site was acquired by the City of Chicago’s Department of Environment from the Beltway Railroad Corporation. Although some planning took place thereafter the site was largely left undeveloped. At the start of 2012 the Department of Environment was disbanded and the site was transferred to the Chicago Park District. From 2013 to present day, a master planning

process with community input in addition to the removal of invasive species has been ongoing. The first phase of the project will begin with the environmental remediation and ecological restoration of the site.

Park Naming Process

The Park Naming Procedures, which are explained in the Chicago Park District Code, provide a two-step process that allows for public comment and requires support from community organizations and elected officials prior to the official designation of a name by the Board of Commissioners. Park names must meet the criteria outlined in the code. If parks are to be named in honor of a person, he or she must be deceased for at least one year, and also must have made a demonstrated betterment at the neighborhood, local, regional, national or international level.



Marian R. Byrnes
Photo: Arthur Melville Pearson

Existing Conditions

Ecological Conditions

Habitat conservation and ecological restoration are becoming increasingly important due to continued urbanization and the current rate of habitat loss. In this context, urban parks play a very important role in providing habitat and respite for wildlife as well as nature access and education for people. The site is a part of the Illinois Coastal Management Zone, and thus is critical habitat for native plants, animals, and particularly for migrating birds. The large size of the park is one of its unique qualities and contributes to its high ecological value and potential to become a sanctuary for migrating and resident species. The size and ecological role is also a critical resource to study, experience, and appreciate the vital ecology of the region.

The existing site is primarily split into wetlands on the west and woodlands on the east, the division mostly a result of the slag deposits. Currently, most of the wetland area is overrun by the aggressively invasive Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) with some native species still present. There is a larger body of permanently open water in the northwest but most of the wetlands vary seasonally. Large areas of slag are still exposed in the central sections of the site where a shallow marsh and wet prairie can be restored. The eastern half of the site, beyond the slag area is largely covered by volunteer tree species, mostly consisting of Cottonwoods and Ash. European buckthorn, an invasive shrub once dominated the understory, but a concentrated removal effort initiated in 2013 has been made as a first step towards restoring the woodland plant community.

The site is mostly flat and drains from an approximate center line to the west and east. Along the eastern edge of the site slight depressions retain water seasonally in woodland ponds. At the north end of the site stand several large mounds constructed of the excavated fill from the detention pond in the northeast corner. The mounds are a major feature of the north end and provide excellent views across the entire length of the site. There are scattered low mounds in the woodlands, most formed by the dumping of construction debris along the eastern half of the site.



1. Site Vegetation



2. Hydrology



3. Debris / Fly Dumping



4. Access (white indicates proposed)

Environmental Conditions

Beginning in the early 1900s, the prairie/wetlands (western) portion of the site was filled with slag from local steel production. In later years, the woodlands (eastern) portion, as well as the southern and northern areas of the site, was filled with soils and intermixed construction and demolition debris. Throughout the last 20 years, the site has been extensively investigated to determine what environmental concerns may be present.

An evaluation of nearly 300 soil, sediment and water samples collected from the property was performed to determine the existing environmental conditions and assess potential environmental risk. Risk assessments were performed using Illinois EPA and US EPA accepted practices to evaluate whether current conditions represent environmental risks to site users, including sensitive users such as children. Analysis of the data indicates that environmental conditions are not atypical of many Chicago properties. The risk assessment determined that environmental risks were not identified in association with the slag filled shallow wetland and prairie areas and that atypical environmental risks were not identified within the woodland and meadow areas.

Access & Signage

Present day public access into the site is limited to several pedestrian entries along the eastern boundary of the site, adjacent to the Jeffery Manor neighborhood. The entries are generally poorly marked and what signage exists is often unwelcoming and even contradictory.

The site lacks a parking lot and basic amenities which currently deters a more regional draw. With no formal park entry, those arriving by car have to park along S. Van Vlissingen Rd. and walk to and through the neighborhood alley to in order to find access. This is not accommodating for visitors or neighbors. Improving site access through the addition of a parking lot accessible from 103rd, basic site amenities, and improved entries are important components of the site's development.



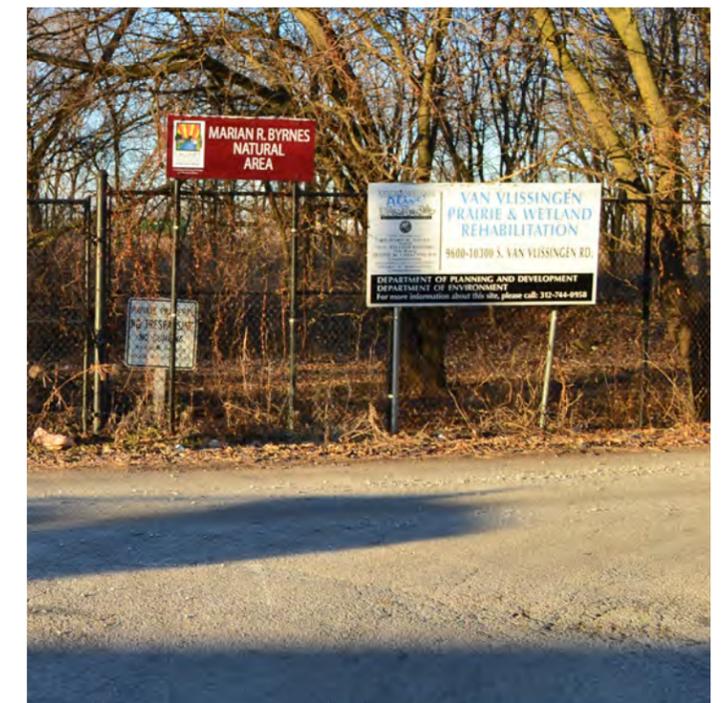
5. Exposed slag



6. Low mounds of construction debris



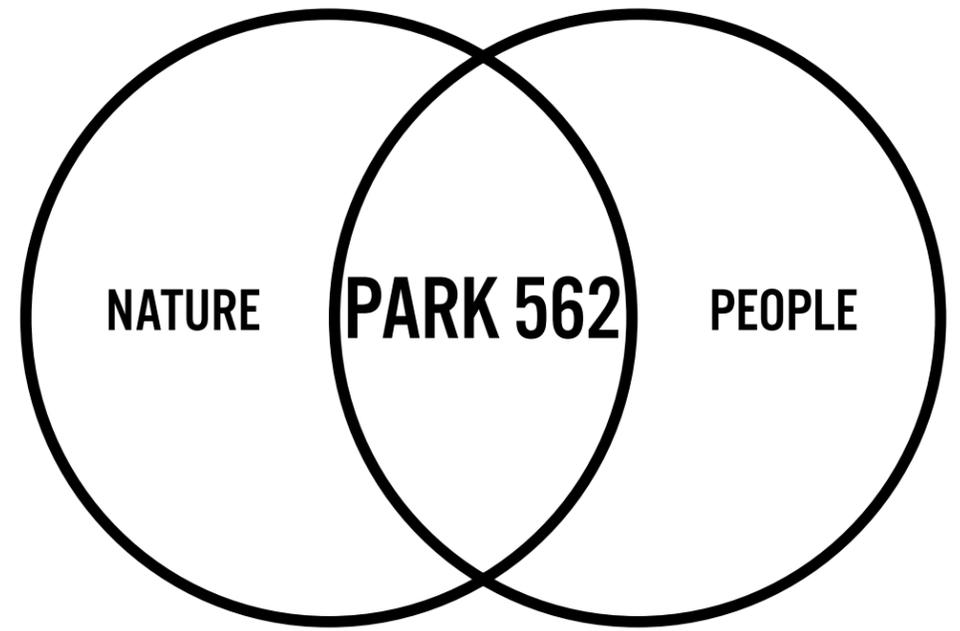
7. Typical pedestrian access along east edge



8. Existing signage



Base plan illustrating current day conditions



BRINGING IT TOGETHER

- ACCESS / ART / BEAUTY / BIODIVERSITY /
- BOARDWALK / CITY / COMMUNITY / CONNECTIONS /
- DISCOVERY / ECOLOGY / EDUCATION /
- ENVIRONMENT / EXPLORATION / GARDEN / HABITAT /
- HISTORY / INCLUSIVITY / JEFFERY MANOR /
- LANDSCAPE / MARIAN R. BYRNES / NATIVE SPECIES /
- OUTLOOK / PARKING / PLAY / PRAIRIE /
- PROGRAMMING / OPEN SPACE / RECREATION / REPOSE /
- RESTORATION / SAFETY / SIGNAGE / STAGE /
- TOPOGRAPHY / TRAILS / WETLANDS / WOODLAND

02.00

PROJECT APPROACH

INPUT, SITE STRATEGY, & AIMS

02.01

STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

02.02

ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

02.03

CIRCULATION & ACCESS

02.04

ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION & ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Stakeholder & Community Involvement

Stakeholder and community involvement played a key role throughout the master planning process.

Feedback gained from stakeholder and community meetings:

- Provide a regional entry and parking lot for visitors at 103rd
- Retain local entries along alley
- Design trail to weave through middle of site through woods, prairie, and wetland
- Keep trails to pedestrians and cyclists
- Provide future trail connections to Big Marsh and Indian Ridge Marsh
- Create an open buffer along the alley
- Attract more visitors - more activity means greater safety
- Plant to add more biodiversity and habitat
- Add boardwalks
- Establish a community garden over time
- Add a play area for children and places to explore
- Provide an outlook and sled hill
- Incorporate unique, environmental art
- Create opportunities for ecological education, stewardship, and restoration volunteering
- Program for families, youth, and senior citizens



Community Meeting #1

November 19th, 2014

Trumbull Park Fieldhouse

Project was introduced and the presentation covered an analysis of the existing site as well as design constraints and opportunities. Presentation was followed by a design charrette, similar to a brainstorming session, to develop additional ideas and concepts.

Park 562 / Big Marsh Joint Stakeholder Meeting

December 8th, 2014

Fosco Park Fieldhouse

Meeting introduced both projects, provided an overview of Calumet region, and opened the floor to discussion between stakeholders. Stakeholders included members from various environmental groups, universities, and local and state agencies, among others.

Community Meeting #2

February 4th, 2015

Trumbull Park Fieldhouse

Meeting included a review and recap of the past presentations and introduced a new, 30% conceptual master plan. This was followed by a group discussion on all those concepts and ideas presented.



Stakeholder Groups Contacted

- Residents in the 7th, 8th and 10th Wards
- Nearby Parks
- Park Advisory Councils
- Athletico
- Oak Health Services
- Bronzeville Children's Museum
- Skyway Lanes
- CAPS 4th District
- Friends of Big Marsh
- Chicago State University
- Olive Harvey College
- Loyola University
- DePaul University
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- Chicago Environmental Fund
- Local Initiatives Support Coalition
- National Park Service
- NIRPC
- Neighborhood Assistance Program
- Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative
- Friends of the Forest Preserve
- Field Museum
- Openlands
- Bluestem Communications
- Pullman Civic Organization
- Trails for Illinois
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Sierra Club
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- OAI
- Calumet Area Industrial Commission
- Pullman Porter Museum
- Claretian Associates
- People for Community Recovery
- GreenCorps
- Faith in Place
- Alliance for the Great Lakes
- Calumet Ecological Park Association
- Friends of the Chicago River
- Southeast Environmental Task Force
- Manor Community Association
- Friends of the Parks
- Chicago Audubon Society
- School of the Art Institute
- Audubon-Chicago Region
- Southeast Historical Society
- Calumet Environmental Science Center
- Chicago Public Library – Jeffery Manor Branch

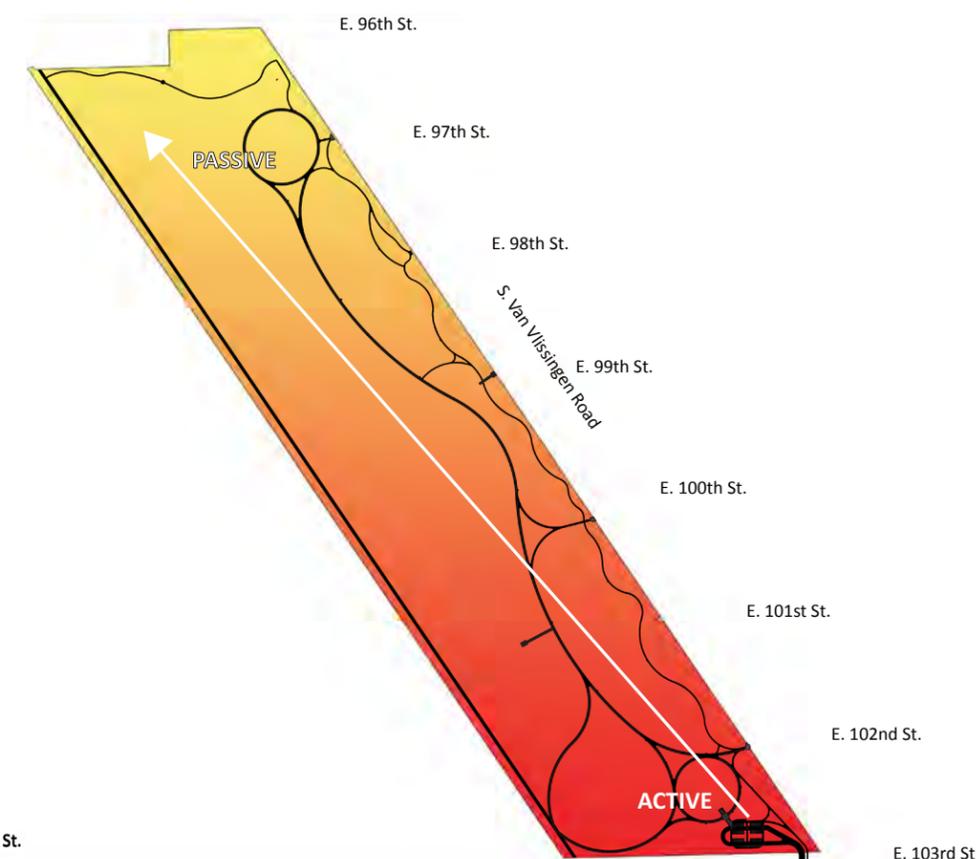
Organizational Principles

The proposed organization and overall layout of the park responds to the ecological characteristics of the site and its relation to the neighborhood. The balance between people-oriented space and space for habitat is essential.

- The existing habitats will be enhanced and restored with woodlands along the eastern edge, leading to open areas on the west, with savanna, marsh, wet prairie and short grass prairie.
- Regional access will be at the southeast corner at 103rd Street and this will allow the wider public to access the site.
- The southeastern/regional area will contain the parking lot, future community gardens, and more intensive recreational uses, such as areas for nature-based play and a sled hill. Moving towards the north end of the site, active uses transition to passive ones.
- By concentrating people-oriented spaces at the southeast section of the park, we anticipate that negative impacts to the wetlands and upland ecosystems due to human activity will be minimized.



Ecological transition within the park moves from east (woodland) to west (open prairie and wetlands). People-oriented space is kept towards the 'local' east edge which retains a higher degree of separation for the wetland habitat to the west.



The south end, and particularly the southeast corner, will house the most active spaces and transition to more passive uses towards the north end of the site.

Circulation & Access

Overview

The proposed path system and access to the site is composed of the following components: parking lot, multiuse path, existing ComEd access road, boardwalk with nature viewing platform, woodland paths, and the allée.

Parking

The parking lot and drive off 103rd will serve as the regional entry to the park. Recreational amenities, such as the community garden and the playground, will be situated nearby as will bike racks and portable restrooms.

Multiuse Path

The multiuse path is the primary means of south to north travel across the length of the site. Twelve foot wide and paved with asphalt, it is intended for pedestrian and cyclist use. Its layout is designed to carry visitors past the full array of landscape types on site in long broad curves. At its south end it meets the parking lot and encompasses a proposed butterfly garden. At its north end, beyond a large loop, it connects to an overlook atop the mounds that offers unparalleled views of the entire site. At both ends of the site it connects to the ComEd Access Road forming a complete loop around the site.

ComEd Access Road

The existing ComEd access road runs along the entire western length of the site and serves as access for ComEd to the utility poles that tower alongside the railroad tracks. The road provides excellent views into the wetlands along the west half of the site and will be connected into the remainder of the proposed path system.



Boardwalk

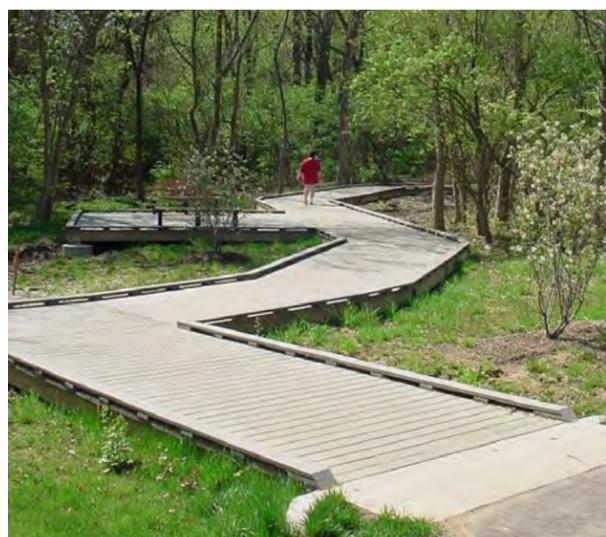
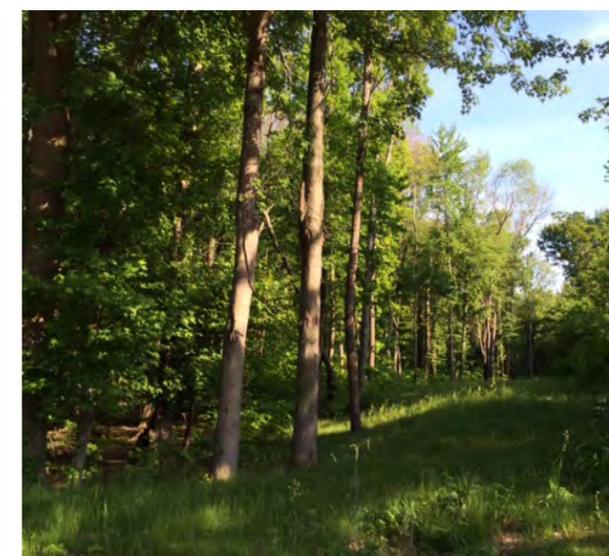
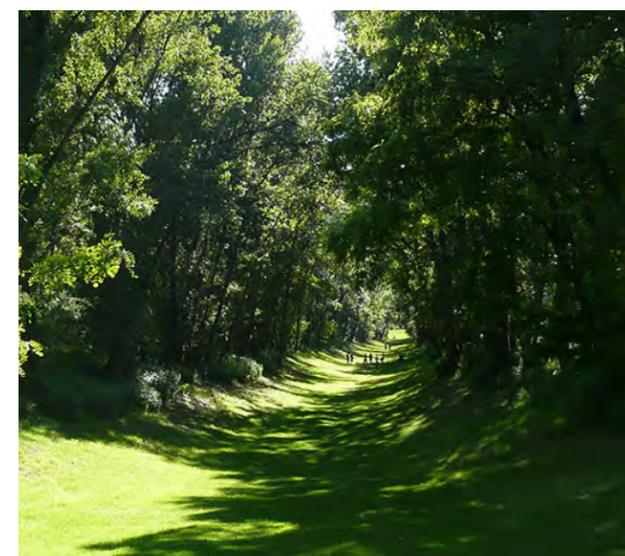
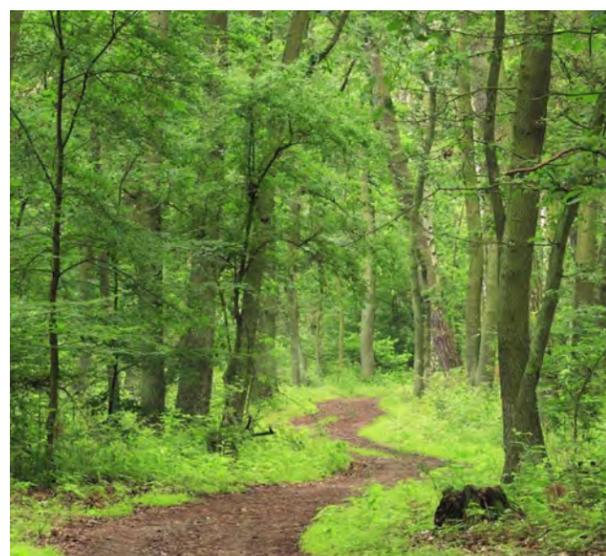
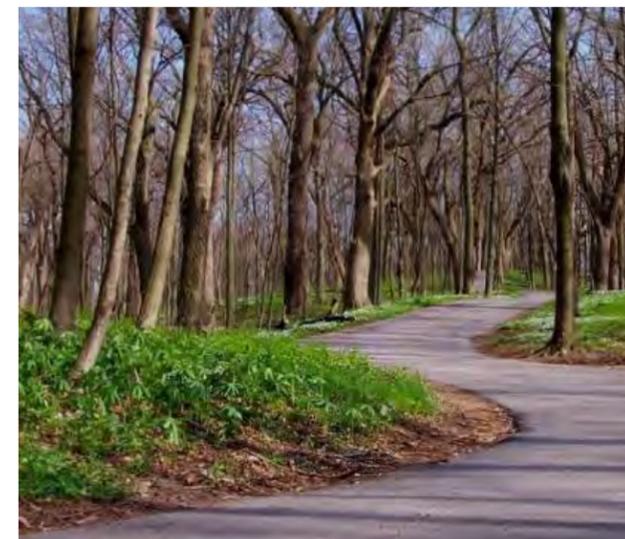
The boardwalk will grant visitors access to a section of the southern wetlands which would otherwise be inaccessible and difficult to experience. It will terminate in a platform with elevated views allowing visitors to clearly lookout over the surrounding wetland landscape. The boardwalk will assist to highlight the wetlands' natural beauty and restoration.

Woodland Paths

The woodland paths function as a secondary walking path system that winds through the woods nearer to the Jeffery Manor neighborhood alongside the alley. These mulched pathways offer a more hiking-like experience and travel by each of the fascinating vernal woodland pools.

Allée

The allée is perhaps the marquis feature of the proposed framework plan. It is a 20 foot wide, clear walking corridor which travels in a straight path extending almost end to end across the entire length of the site. It is intended to provide its passing visitors a unique experience of travel through the landscape with spectacular views throughout. It also supplements the path system as a safe, long, and direct passage through the woodlands. With time, sculptures and artworks can be commissioned to line the corridor and help to establish it as a linear, outdoor gallery and event space. Small clearings in the woods leaf off the main allée as miniature gardens to discover along its path.



Environmental Remediation & Ecological Restoration

Environmental Remediation

Considering the risk assessment results and planned public use of the park, the Park District and Design Team concluded that while atypical risks had not been identified, it would be appropriate to take additional precautionary measures to provide an added layer of protection in any areas of concern. The remedial measures planned for the site include installing soil barriers (caps) in high use areas, including along water features in the eastern woodlands, and the installation of soil and plant material (phytostabilization mats) in other areas the site. Each of these capping measures will be underlain by orange demarcation barriers to allow for their continued maintenance and upkeep.

Ecological Restoration and Enhancement

According to the Society for Ecological Restoration, ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed.

Rather than attempting to travel back in time to restore the site to a pristine pre-settlement condition we will work with existing on-site conditions to improve and enhance the ecosystems that are present. The objective is to emulate a natural, self-regulating system that is integrated ecologically with the landscape in which it occurs. While conducting ecological restoration on the site, we are influenced by principles as outlined by the local and global restoration community.

Restoration is a critical tool for achieving biodiversity conservation, mitigating and adapting to climate change, enhancing ecosystem services, fostering sustainable socioeconomic development, and improving human health and well-being. Activities at this park will seek to meet ecological goals but will also incorporate nature-based recreation and education.

Ecological restoration is an inclusive process that embraces the interrelationships between nature and culture, engages all sectors of society, and enables full and effective participation for a variety of communities. Successful ecological restoration requires the integration of knowledge and practice. We partner with local stakeholders, researchers, neighbors, and policy makers to ensure that we're using the best available knowledge to restore ecosystems in urban areas.

Once restored, the site will be a large and rich mosaic of vital ecosystems within the city limits. The woodland and vernal pools will provide habitat for resident and migratory birds, mammals, and amphibians. The prairie will provide a rich diversity of herbaceous plants for bees, butterflies, insects and other pollinators. And the riparian zones along the wetlands have the potential to become among the most ecologically diverse and dynamic ecosystems in the park.



Buckthorn removal taking place in the woodland



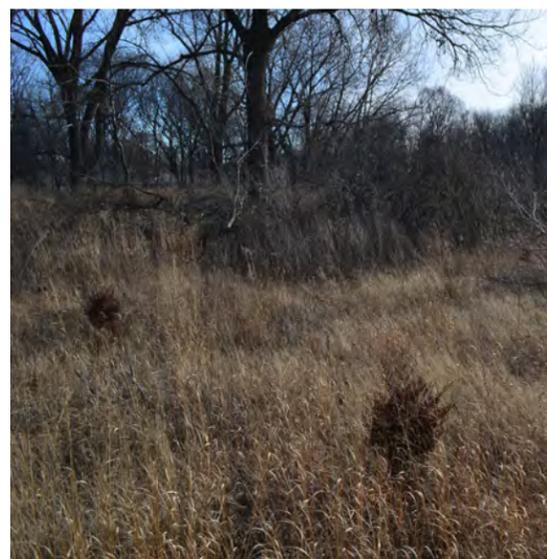
The woodland after buckthorn has been cleared

There are five general ecosystem types at Park 562 to restore and enhance. Additional information on each is provided in the following section.

Woodland



Savanna



Short Grass Prairie



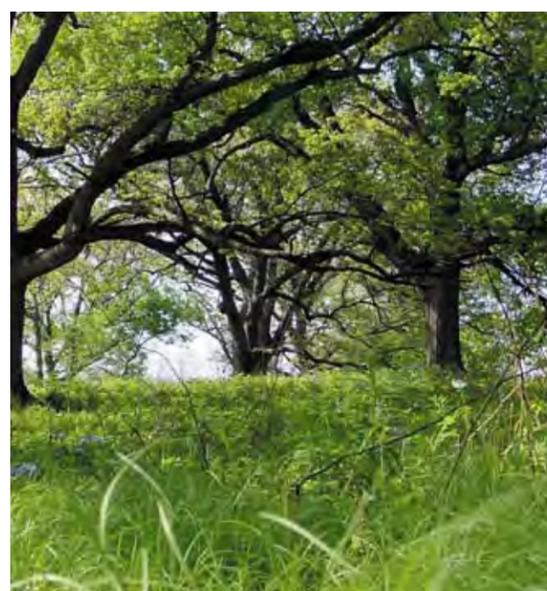
Wet Prairie



Marsh



Existing conditions of ecotypes on site



Examples of these ecotypes post-restoration



03.00

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION: SITE FEATURES

NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS & HABITAT

03.01

WOODLAND

03.02

SAVANNA

03.03

SHORT GRASS PRAIRIE

03.04

WET PRAIRIE

03.05

MARSH

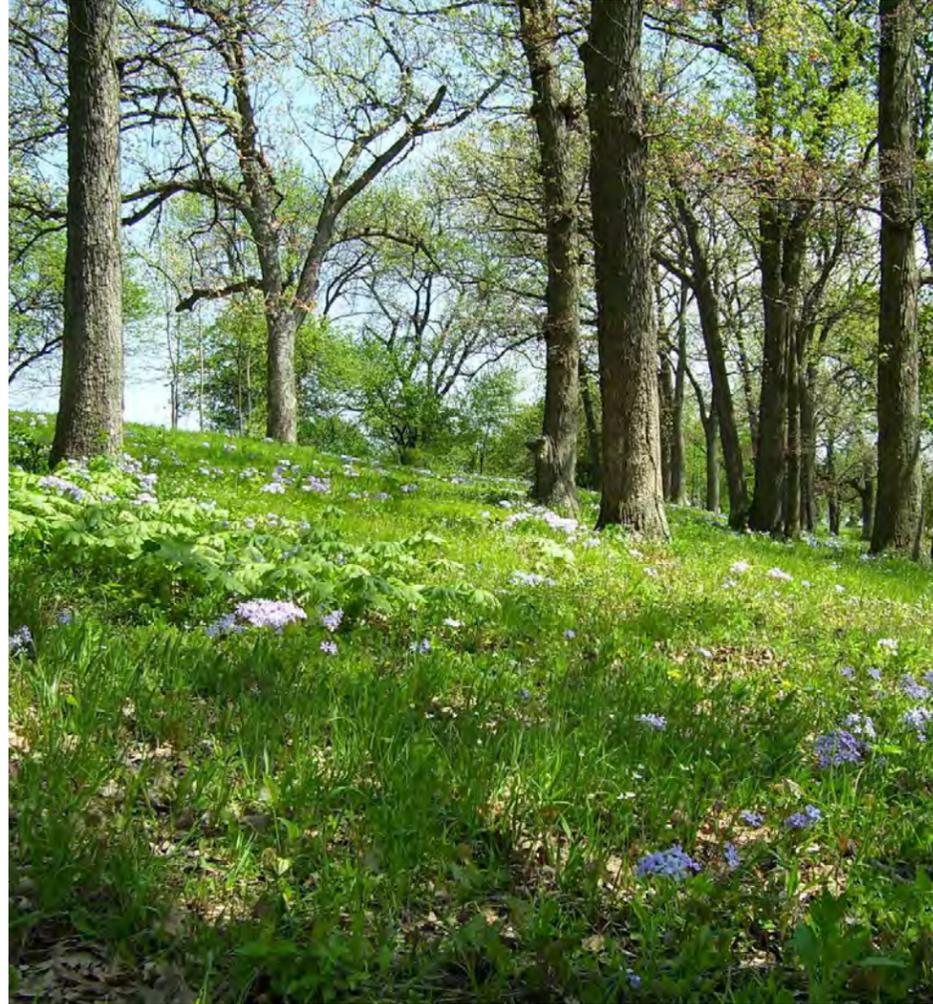
03.06

BUTTERFLY GARDEN

03.07

WILDLIFE

Woodland



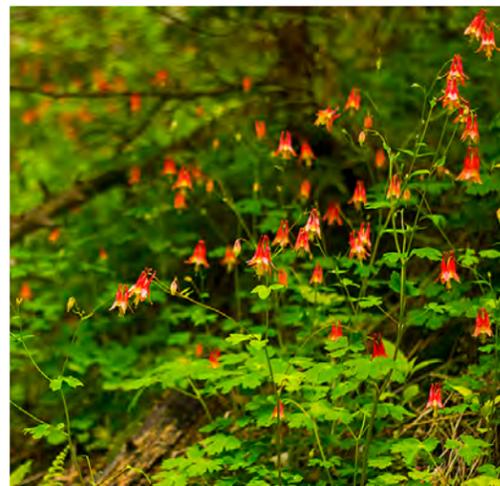
Woodlands are low-density forests forming open habitats with shade to partial shade. Sufficient light comes through the upper canopy to support the reproduction of trees and an understory of shrubs and herbaceous plants, including grasses.



Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*)



Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*)



Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)



Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*)



Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)



Penn Sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*)

WOODLAND PLANT LIST

TREES

Celtis occidentalis
Carya ovata
Gymnocladus dioica
Ostrya virginiana
Prunus serotina
Quercus bicolor
Quercus imbricaria
Quercus macrocarpa
Quercus muehlenbergii

Hackberry
 Shagbark Hickory
 Kentucky Coffeetree
 Hophornbeam
 Black Cherry
 Swamp White Oak
 Shingle Oak
 Bur Oak
 Chinkapin Oak

SHRUBS

Cephalanthus occidentalis
Corylus americana
Cercis canadensis
Lindera benzoin
Sambucus canadensis
Viburnum acerifolium
Viburnum lentago
Viburnum prunifolium

Buttonbush
 American Filbert
 Eastern Redbud
 Spicebush
 Common Elderberry
 Mapleleaf Viburnum
 Nannyberry
 Blackhaw Viburnum

GRASSES / SEDGES / RUSHES

Andropogon scoparius
Bouteloua curtipendula
Carex grayi
Carex pennsylvanica
Carex radiata
Elymus canadensis
Elymus villosus
Elymus virginicus
Festuca obtusa
Hystrix patula

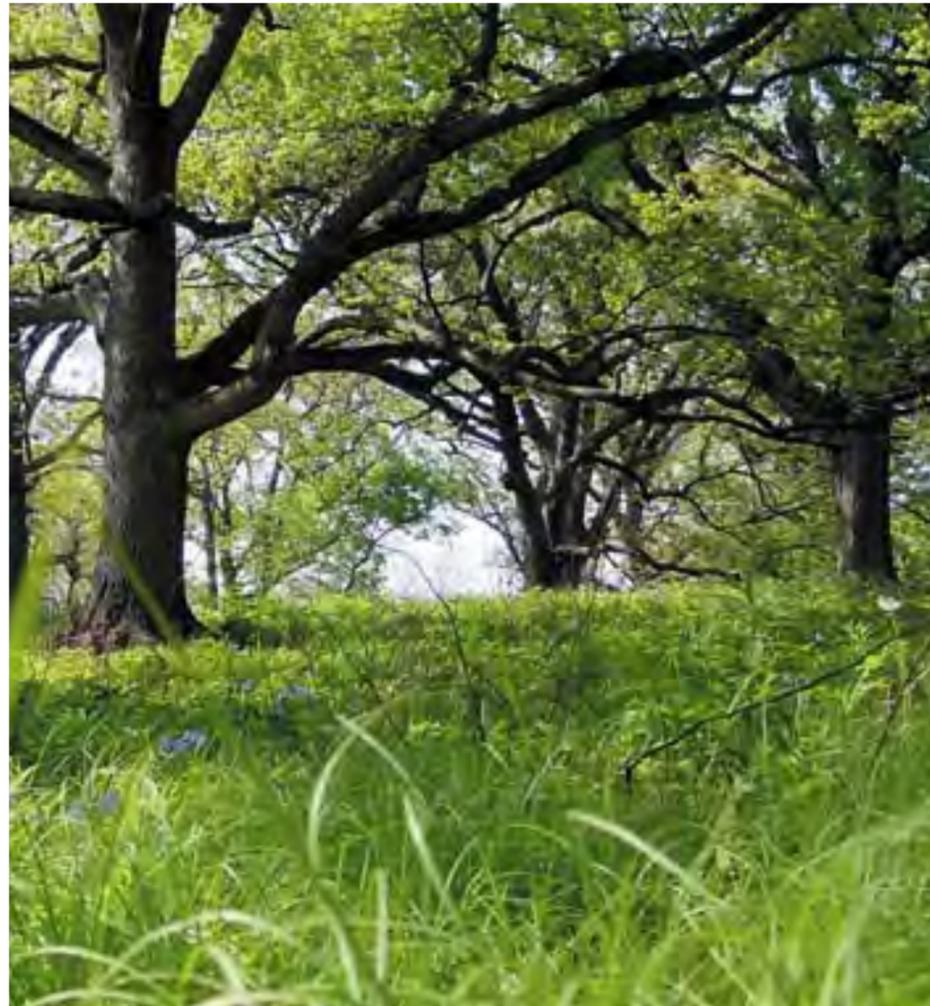
Little Bluestem
 Side-oats Grama
 Grays Sedge
 Penn Sedge
 Straight-styled Wood Sedge
 Canada Wild Rye
 Silky Wild Rye
 Virginia Wild Rye
 Nodding Fescue
 Bottlebrush Grass

FORBS

Agastache scrophulariaefolia
Aquilegia canadensis
Asarum canadense
Aster sagittifolius
Aster sagittifolius drummondii
Aster shortii
Campanula americana
Impatiens capensis
Dicentra cucullaria
Echinacea purpurea
Echinacea pallida
Erythronium albinum
Geranium maculatum
Lilium michiganense
Lobelia siphilitica
Lupinus perennis
Penstemon digitalis
Phlox divaricata
Polygonatum canaliculatum
Ratibida pinnata
Rudbeckia hirta
Rudbeckia subtomentosa
Rudbeckia triloba
Sanguinaria canadensis
Sisyrinchium albidum
Smilacina racemosa
Solidago flexicaulis
Solidago ulmifolia
Stylophorum diphyllum
Tradescantia ohiensis
Trillium grandiflorum
Zizia aurea

Purple Giant Hyssop
 Wild Columbine
 Wild Ginger
 Arrow-leaved Aster
 Drummonds Aster
 Shorts Aster
 Tall Bellflower
 Spotted Touch-me-not
 Dutchmans Breeches
 Purple Coneflower
 Pale Purple Coneflower
 White Trout Lily
 Wild Geranium
 Michigan Lily
 Great Blue Lobelia
 Wild Lupine
 Foxglove Beard Tongue
 Woodland Phlox
 Smooth Solomons Seal
 Yellow Coneflower
 Black-eyed Susan
 Sweet Black-eyed Susan
 Brown-eyed Susan
 Bloodroot
 White Blue-eyed Grass
 False Solomons Seal
 Zig Zag Goldenrod
 Elm-leaved Goldenrod
 Celadine Poppy
 Common Spiderwort
 Large Flowered Trillium
 Golden Alexanders

Savanna



Savannas are lightly wooded plant communities with loose tree canopy cover, dominated by grasses and sedges. Oaks with large, open canopies are typically the dominant tree species.



Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)



Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)



Side-oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)



Short's Aster (*Aster shortii*)



Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)



Michigan Lily (*Lilium michiganense*)

SAVANNA PLANT LIST

TREES

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Celtis occidentalis</i> | Hackberry |
| <i>Carya ovata</i> | Shagbark Hickory |
| <i>Quercus bicolor</i> | Swamp White Oak |
| <i>Quercus imbricaria</i> | Shingle Oak |
| <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> | Bur Oak |
| <i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i> | Chinkapin Oak |
| <i>Cercis canadensis</i> | Eastern Redbud |

GRASSES / SEDGES / RUSHES

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Andropogon scoparius</i> | Little Bluestem |
| <i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i> | Side-oats Grama |
| <i>Carex brevior</i> | Shorter Sedge |
| <i>Elymus canadensis</i> | Canada Wild Rye |
| <i>Elymus villosus</i> | Silky Wild Rye |
| <i>Elymus virginicus</i> | Virginia Wild Rye |
| <i>Festuca obtusa</i> | Nodding Fescue |
| <i>Hystrix patula</i> | Bottlebrush Grass |

FORBS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Agastache scrophulariaefolia</i> | Purple Giant Hyssop |
| <i>Allium cernuum</i> | Nodding Wild Onion |
| <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> | Wild Columbine |
| <i>Aster sagittifolius</i> | Arrow-leaved Aster |
| <i>Aster sagittifolius drummondii</i> | Drummonds Aster |
| <i>Aster shortii</i> | Short's Aster |
| <i>Camassia scilloides</i> | Wild Hyacinth |
| <i>Campanula americana</i> | Tall Bellflower |
| <i>Dicentra cucullaria</i> | Dutchmans Breeches |
| <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> | Purple Coneflower |
| <i>Echinacea pallida</i> | Pale Purple Coneflower |
| <i>Geranium maculatum</i> | Wild Geranium |
| <i>Lilium michiganense</i> | Michigan Lily |
| <i>Lobelia siphilitica</i> | Great Blue Lobelia |
| <i>Lupinus perennis</i> | Wild Lupine |
| <i>Penstemon digitalis</i> | Foxglove Beard Tongue |
| <i>Penstemon calycosus</i> | Long-sepal Penstemon |
| <i>Phlox divaricata</i> | Woodland Phlox |
| <i>Polygonatum canaliculatum</i> | Smooth Solomons Seal |
| <i>Ratibida pinnata</i> | Yellow Coneflower |
| <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> | Black-eyed Susan |
| <i>Rudbeckia subtomentosa</i> | Sweet Black-eyed Susan |
| <i>Rudbeckia triloba</i> | Brown-eyed Susan |
| <i>Sisyrinchium albidum</i> | White Blue-eyed Grass |
| <i>Solidago flexicaulis</i> | Zig Zag Goldenrod |
| <i>Solidago ulmifolia</i> | Elm-leaved Goldenrod |
| <i>Tradescantia ohioensis</i> | Common Spiderwort |
| <i>Zizia aurea</i> | Golden Alexanders |

Short Grass Prairie



Short grass prairie is primarily composed of short grasses and flowering forbs. It is the shorter relative to the tall grass prairie which is more common to Illinois. At Park 562, small pockets of short grass prairie stand near the north end of the site and, in some cases, on the periphery of exposed slag areas.



Little Bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*)



Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)



White Wild Indigo (*Baptisia leucantha*)



Lead Plant (*Amorpha canescens*)



Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)



Rough Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*)

SHORT GRASS PRAIRIE PLANT LIST

GRASSES / SEDGES

Andropogon scoparius
Bouteloua curtipendula
Carex bicknelli
Carex brevior
Elymus canadensis
Elymus virginicus
Juncus dudleyi
Juncus tenuis
Juncus torreyi
Panicum virgatum
Scirpus cyerinus
Scripus pendulus
Spartina pectinata
Sporobolus heterolepis

Little Bluestem
 Side-oats Grama
 Bicknells Sedge
 Shorter Sedge
 Canada Wild Rye
 Virginia Wild Rye
 Dudleys Rush
 Slender Rush
 Torreys Rush
 Switch Grass
 Wool Grass
 Reddish Bulrush
 Prairie Cord Grass
 Prairie Dropseed

FORBS

Asclepias tuberosa
Asclepias syriaca
Asclepias verticillata
Amorpha canescens
Aster novae-angliae
Astragalus canadensis
Baptisia leucantha
Blephilia ciliata
Comandra umbellata
Echinacea purpurea
Echinacea pallida
Eryngium yuccifolium
Heliopsis helianthoides
Liatris aspera
Lupinus perennis
Lycopus americanus
Lythrum alatum
Mentha arvensis villosa
Monarda fistulosa
Pedicularis canadensis
Penstemon digitalis
Petalostemum purpureum
Physostegia virginiana
Pycnanthemum virginicum
Ratibida pinnata
Rudbeckia hirta
Rudbeckia subtomentosa
Silphium integrifolium
Silphium laciniatum
Silphium terebinthinaceum
Solidago rigida
Solidago graminifolia
Sisyrinchium albidum
Vernonia fasciculata
Zizia aurea

Butterfly Milkweed
 Common Milkweed
 Whorled Milkweed
 Lead Plant
 New England Aster
 Canadian Milk Vetch
 White Wild Indigo
 Downy Wood Mint
 Bastrad Toadflax
 Purple Coneflower
 Pale Purple Coneflower
 Rattlesnake Master
 False Sunflower
 Rough Blazing Star
 Wild Lupine
 Common Bugleweed
 Winged Loosestrife
 Field Mint
 Wild Bergamot
 Wood Bentony
 Foxglove Beard Tongue
 Purple Prairie Clover
 Obedient Plant
 Common Mountain Mint
 Yellow Coneflower
 Black-eyed Susan
 Sweet Black-eyed Susan
 Rosin Weed
 Compass Plant
 Prairie Dock
 Stiff Goldenrod
 Grass-leaved Goldenrod
 White Blue-eyed Grass
 Common Ironweed
 Golden Alexanders

Wet Prairie



Wet prairies are herbaceous wetlands dominated by a mixture of grasses and sedges, such as switch grass and prairie cord grass, and also forbs, such as goldenrod and foxglove beardtongue. Water will occasionally pool here during wetter seasons supporting amphibian life but can dry up come late summer.



Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum*)



Prairie Cord Grass (*Spartina pectinata*)



Blue Flag Iris (*Iris virginica*)



Nodding Bur Marigold (*Bidens cernua*)



Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*)



Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)

WET PRAIRIE PLANT LIST

GRASSES / SEDGES

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Agrostis alba palustris</i> | Bent Grass |
| <i>Allium cernuum</i> | Nodding Onion |
| <i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i> | Blue Joint Grass |
| <i>Carex annectans</i> var. <i>xanthocarpa</i> | Yellow Fox Sedge |
| <i>Carex bicknellii</i> | Bicknell's Sedge |
| <i>Carex brevior</i> | Shorter Sedge |
| <i>Carex frankii</i> | Bristly Cattail Sedge |
| <i>Carex granularis</i> | Meadow Sedge |
| <i>Carex scoparia</i> | Broom Sedge |
| <i>Carex stricta</i> | Tussock Sedge |
| <i>Carex tribuloides</i> | Blunt Broom Sedge |
| <i>Carex vulpinoidea</i> | Fox Sedge |
| <i>Eleocharis compressa</i> | Flat-stemmed Spikerush |
| <i>Elymus canadensis</i> | Canada Wild Rye |
| <i>Elymus virginicus</i> | Virginia Wild Rye |
| <i>Glyceria striata</i> | Fowl Manna Grass |
| <i>Juncus dudleyi</i> | Dudley's Rush |
| <i>Juncus nodosus</i> | Knotted Rush |
| <i>Juncus tenuis</i> | Slender Rush |
| <i>Juncus torreyi</i> | Torreys Rush |
| <i>Panicum virgatum</i> | Switch Grass |
| <i>Scirpus atrovirens</i> | Dark Green Rush |
| <i>Scirpus cyerinus</i> | Wool Grass |
| <i>Scirpus pendulus</i> | Reddish Bulrush |
| <i>Spartina pectinata</i> | Prairie Cord Grass |

FORBS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Asclepias incarnata</i> | Swamp Milkweed |
| <i>Asclepias verticillata</i> | Whorled Milkweed |
| <i>Aster novae-angliae</i> | New England Aster |
| <i>Aster simplex</i> | Panicled Aster |
| <i>Bidens cernua</i> | Nodding Bur Marigold |
| <i>Blephilia ciliata</i> | Downy Wood Mint |
| <i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i> | Rattlesnake Master |
| <i>Helenium autumnale</i> | Sneezeweed |
| <i>Iris virginica</i> | Blue Flag Iris |
| <i>Liatris pycnostachya</i> | Prairie Blazing Star |
| <i>Liatris spicata</i> | Pale-spiked Blazing Star |
| <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> | Cardinal Flower |
| <i>Lycopus americanus</i> | Common Bugleweed |
| <i>Lythrum alatum</i> | Winged Loosestrife |
| <i>Mentha arvensis villosa</i> | Field Mint |
| <i>Penstemon digitalis</i> | Foxglove Beard Tongue |
| <i>Physostegia virginiana</i> | Obedient Plant |
| <i>Pycnanthemum virginicum</i> | Common Mountain Mint |
| <i>Rudbeckia triloba</i> | Brown-eyed Susan |
| <i>Solidago riddellii</i> | Riddell's Goldenrod |
| <i>Solidago gigantea</i> | Late Goldenrod |
| <i>Solidago graminifolia</i> | Grass-leaved Goldenrod |
| <i>Sisyrinchium albidum</i> | White Blue-eyed Grass |
| <i>Verbena hastata</i> | Blue Vervain |
| <i>Vernonia fasciculata</i> | Common Ironweed |
| <i>Zizia aurea</i> | Golden Alexanders |

Marsh



Marshes are wetlands that are often or permanently inundated during high water periods at the edges of rivers, streams, lakes, or ponds. Marshes may be dominated by submersed, floating-leaved, or emergent vegetation, including various sedges, rushes, grasses, and other forbs. At Park 562, marshes are largely due to the impermeability of the slag areas on the west part of the site.



Bristly Sedge (*Carex comosa*)



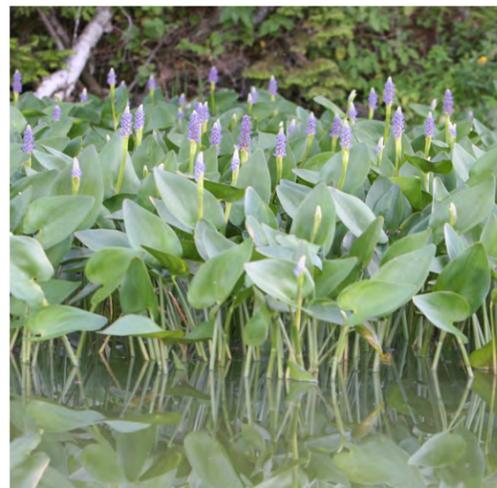
Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*)



Hard-stem Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus acutus*)



Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*)



Pickerel Weed (*Pontederia cordata*)



White Water Lily (*Nymphaea odorata*)

MARSH PLANT LIST

GRASSES / SEDGES / RUSHES

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Carex comosa</i> | Bristly Sedge |
| <i>Carex lacustris</i> | Lake Sedge |
| <i>Carex pellita</i> | Woolly Sedge |
| <i>Eleocharis erythropoda</i> | Redrooted Spike Rush |
| <i>Juncus effusus</i> | Soft Rush |
| <i>Schoenoplectus acutus</i> | Hard-stem Bulrush |
| <i>Schoenoplectus tabernaemontar</i> | Soft-stem Bulrush |
| <i>Sparganium eurycarpum</i> | Common Bur Reed |

FORBS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Pontederia cordata</i> | Pickerel Weed |
| <i>Sagittaria latifolia</i> | Common Arrowhead |

OPEN WATER / AQUATIC PLANT LIST

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Lemna minor</i> | Common Duckweed |
| <i>Potamogeton nodosus</i> | Longleaf Pond Weed |
| <i>Vallisneria americana</i> | Eel Grass |
| <i>Nymphaea odorata</i> | White Water Lily |

Butterfly Garden



Milkweed is a valued nectar resource to a diverse suite of insects



Monarch butterfly caterpillar



Pollinators atop Goldenrod flowers

The butterfly garden, not truly a separate ecotype of its own, will be similar to the short grass prairie but specifically designed to attract butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Many butterfly and bee populations are shrinking as a result of habitat loss and fragmentation. Butterfly gardens aim to restore habitat through planting a diverse mix of flowering forbs with nectar-rich blooms and host plants, like Common Milkweed, that feed caterpillars and larvae before metamorphosis occurs. Butterfly gardens provide lovely visual interest and color throughout the seasons. Here at Park 562, the proposed allée begins and runs through the large, open butterfly garden before it travels past the woodland's edge and into the trees.



Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)



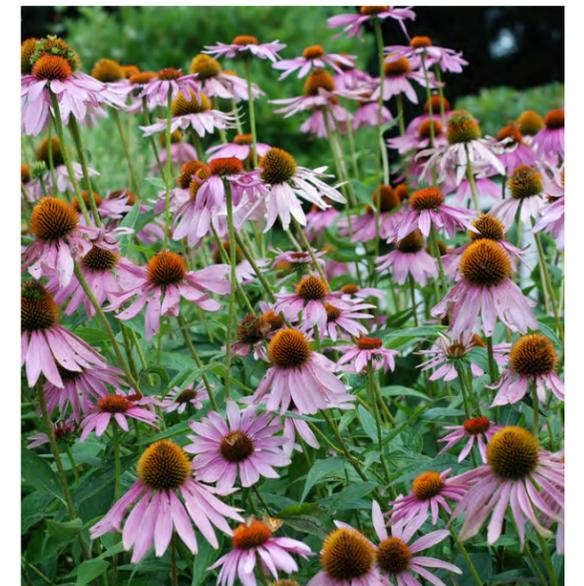
Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)



Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)



Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*)



Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Wildlife



Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)



Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)



Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*)



Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*)

Park 562 is home to a wide array of wildlife that some may be surprised to find living here on Chicago's south side. At 135 acres, it is one of the largest open, natural areas in the region. And with its unique hydrological conditions, the site provides habitat and shelter to a great deal of species which would be unlikely to survive in other, more developed parts of the city. This site is already a popular destination among Chicago birders who like to visit during migration periods. The railroad along the site's western edge links to other open spaces further south and effectively functions as a wildlife corridor connecting these larger pockets of habitat. As the park ecosystems and habitat are improved and enhanced, we hope to see wildlife flourish as well.



White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)



Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)



Coyote (*Canis latrans*)



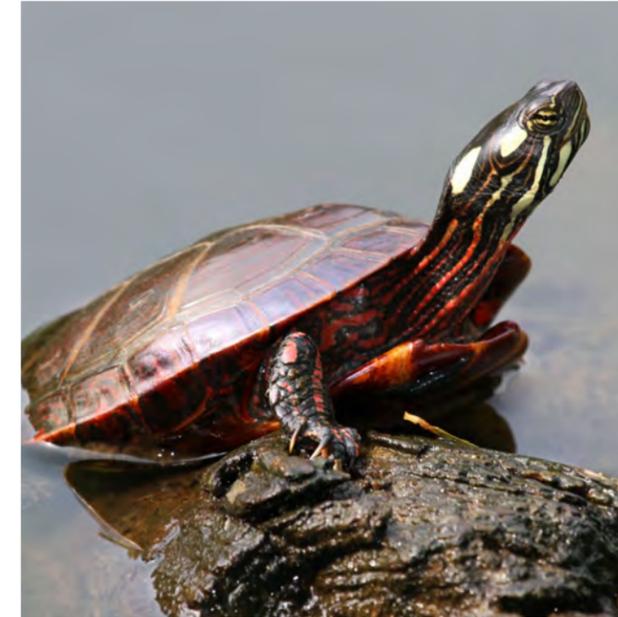
American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*)



Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*)



Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)



Painted Turtle (*Chrysemy picta*)



Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)



Eastern Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa viginica*)



Ruby Meadowhawk Dragonfly (*Sympetrum rubicundulum*)



Emerald Spreadwing Damselfly (*Lestes dryas*)



Overlook
Trail to Overlook

Allée Sculptural Gateway

Multi-use Path
ComEd Access Road

Woodland Sculpture

Woodland Pond
Woodland Sculpture
Woodland Path

Boardwalk
Woodland Allée
Woodland Gathering Space
Woodland Stage

Allée Sculptural Gateway
Sled Hill
Community Garden
Nature Play Space
Parking Lot

- WOODLAND
- SAVANNA
- SHORT GRASS PRAIRIE
- WET PRAIRIE
- MARSH

SCALE: 1"=200'-0"
0' 100' 200' 400'

04.00

ENGAGING PEOPLE: SITE AMENITIES

PARK ELEMENTS FOR PASSIVE & ACTIVE RECREATION

04.01

TRAILS, BOARDWALK, & PARKING LOT

04.02

ALLÉE

04.03

WOODLAND STAGE & GATHERING SPACES

04.04

EDUCATION & PROGRAMMING

04.05

NATURE PLAY SPACE

04.06

COMMUNITY GARDEN

04.07

SLED HILL

04.08

ART IN THE LANDSCAPE

Trails, Boardwalk, & Parking Lot

Trails

Because the existing site lacks any form of proper trail, the proposed trail system is the key amenity in opening the park to new visitors and users. The trail system is designed to take park visitors through the full breadth of landscape types on site.

The multiuse asphalt path is intended for active recreation and exercise like walking, running, and cycling. Over two miles of new asphalt path are proposed.

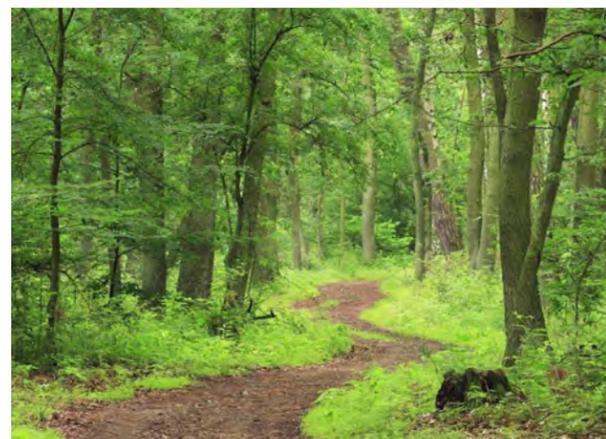
The mulched woodland path is intended for more passive hikes and exploration of the woods and ponds. Roughly a mile of woodland path is proposed with opportunity to add over time.

At both ends of the park trails connect to the existing gravel access road along the western edge of the site. This adds another 3/4 mile of path and provides excellent views of the adjacent wetlands and railroad.

Atop the hill on the north end, trails lead to an overlook with outstanding views over almost the full length of the site.



Examples of an asphalt, multiuse path



Examples of a mulched, woodland path



View from the hill on the north end looking south across the length of the site

Boardwalk

The boardwalk will provide park visitors with access to a section of the ‘hidden world’ of the wetlands. These wet prairie and marsh landscapes are otherwise difficult to reach but well worth showcasing. The boardwalk will cross the open water’s edge and end in a larger viewing platform that can accommodate groups of birders, field trips, etc. Interpretive signage posted along the boardwalk could provide information to visitors about the wetland flora and fauna that can be seen on site. The boardwalk is an excellent tool to help educate the visiting public concerning wetland beauty and ecology and help build support for protection and restoration of wetlands and similar natural resources.



Examples of a wetland boardwalk and viewing platform



Parking Lot

Current access to the site is limited to a few pedestrian entries along its east, alley-side edge. For visitors driving to the site, this requires parking along S. Van Vlissingen Rd. and walking through the alley to enter. This is both inconvenient and often confusing, especially for newcomers to the park. Neighbors of the park have also expressed concerns with visitors to the park walking through the alley behind their yards.

Throughout the community outreach process, a desire for on-site parking was voiced. The proposed parking lot at the park’s southeast corner will establish a clear regional entry with easy access into the park from E. 103rd St. The lot is currently planned to accommodate 47 parking spaces (including two which are handicap accessible) and 2 stalls for bus parking.

Allée

The allée is a keystone design feature in the proposed plans. It is a long, linear passage that runs almost end to end across the entire length of the site. Standing at one end and looking to the other, one will see a far-reaching aisle set into the natural landscape that extends to a point somewhere beyond what eyes can see.

This unique space is intended to provide its passing visitors with a sense of wonderment and a park feature unlike most others. Walking through it, plantings will open up to views of the various landscapes. Small clearings in the woods will appear off the main corridor and lead visitors to discover small pockets of natural gardens or unique artworks set deep in the woods. It will enable a sense of discovery.

The twenty foot wide walking corridor will be planted with a hardy mix of grass species that can tolerate foot traffic and mowing when needed. Flowering forbs like nodding onion and aster will be interplanted to add seasonal color and display. As the seasons change so will the aesthetic and feel of the allée thus encouraging visitors to return again.



Allée in the seasons



The allée - a green corridor and passageway

Woodland Stage & Gathering Spaces

Woodland occupies roughly half of the site and covers a great deal of area. Herein lie many opportunities to create or enhance small openings and gathering spaces. During the community outreach process one idea came to be very popular - the concept of a simple, but big woodland stage tucked in between the trees. It could be used as a performance and/or gathering space for the adjacent community. A simple platform might double as a play space for children. Set within a woodland clearing, the stage might be something for a visitor to discover or come upon and spur curiosity to explore.

Ideas for other gathering spaces could be generated through a process of soliciting proposals from teams of local artists and community-based organizations. The resulting artistic installations would reflect connections between local culture/community and the natural environment at Van Vlissingen Prairie, while also providing places for people to rest or convene.



Example of a simple stage-like feature set into the woods



Woodland clearing

Education & Programming

As ecologically-based recreation and restoration are the core themes to the park's development, it is important to provide a strong educational component to raise awareness of these tenets.

On-site educational and interpretive signage will acknowledge the site's cultural and environmental history as well as restoration efforts that have taken place. It may also serve to educate visitors about particular wildlife or plant species that occupy Park 562.

Beyond providing informational signage, the Chicago Park District will work to provide programming and stewardship opportunities for neighbors and visitors of all ages. Already, the Park District has partnered with several schools and parks in the area to offer tours, field trips and recreational experiences in the park and other natural area sites in the region. This provides students and community members of all ages with a valuable exposure to our natural environment and systems and teaches why these places are so important for nature, for the city and for human health.



Nature Play Space

The nature play space is a designated environment where children of all ages play and learn by engaging with components such as downed trees, stumps, and boulders. These elements, creatively arranged, function as an alternative to static playgrounds while encouraging imaginative play through sensory and motor exploration that helps establish a stronger bond to nature. The nature play space will be located close to the on-site parking lot and will be age-appropriately challenging both physically and mentally. The design will be inherently sustainable by the use of natural resources in their basic form. Tree trunks and stumps can be sourced from on site or from tree removals in the surrounding Jeffery Manor neighborhood.

The intent of this space is to create opportunities to play with and learn through the natural world. Interdisciplinary research demonstrates that this type of setting and play experience not only develops environmental literacy, but also promotes imaginative play, individual and group problem-solving, increased resiliency, and improved balance and motor skills. For this reason, the team advises against the use of traditional playground elements such as swings, slides, and so on so that the nature adventure area does not look, feel, or abound to the rules of a normal playground. Instead, features like climbing logs, nest-like forts, stump fields, and rock scrambles can be incorporated in a unique fashion to make play simulating, unstructured and more creative.



Community Garden

Community gardens can better enhance health, recreation, and sense of community all while providing its users with an opportunity to grow and harvest fresh vegetables and herbs.

As part of the master plan, space has been set aside for the potential development of a community garden by members of the neighboring Jeffery Manor community. The set aside footprint of approximately 4,000 square feet would accommodate 35 4'x10' plots although this number could easily change depending on initial community demand. The proposed location sits between the parking lot and the neighborhood entrance at 102nd St.. Water will be supplied from a hose bibb at the proposed drinking fountain near the 102nd St. entry.

Starting a Community Garden on Chicago Park District property requires organization and commitment. Community Gardens are a grassroots endeavor – the design, planning, funding and building, as well as the long term management and maintenance, are all the responsibility of the community members who wish to garden in their park. The Community Gardens in the Parks Program serves as the liaison between new Community Garden groups and the Chicago Park District, and help provide support and resources throughout the life of the garden.



For more information, please visit <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/facilities/community-gardens/> or contact communitygardens@chicagoparkdistrict.com.

Sled Hill

The sled hill is a component of the plan that will be potentially constructed and built up over several different phases and years. Construction all at once is cost prohibitive to the current project budget but as clean fill material becomes available in the area it can be transported and shaped into a sled hill here at Van Vlissingen.

Topography can be difficult to find in Chicago and so the concept of a sled hill was popular among resident feedback. The hill might ultimately stand 15-20 feet or higher and flat-topped to allow for an overlook and space to picnic at its peak.

The proposed location is a short distance west of the parking lot as it is expected to be a regional draw during the winter months.



A sled hill could become a valued recreational feature to the area



The proposed sled hill shape - it would be smaller in scale

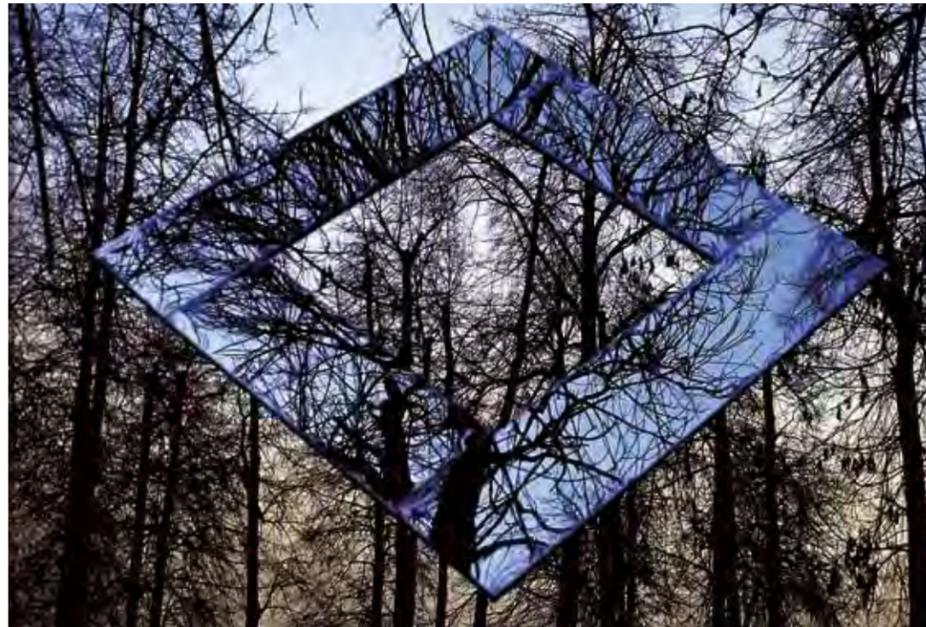
Art in the Landscape

The Chicago Park District wishes to bring artists to Park 562 to create works that are inspired by and installed in the natural world. The aim is to connect visitors with nature and inspire environmental awareness.

Art set in the landscape can engage the public who many have less interest in the traditional object-oriented presentation of art in museums and galleries as well as those that are unfamiliar with creative installations integrated in a natural setting.

Discovering art set in the landscape will capture attention and draw visitors into a relationship with our environment not yet established. It will add new ways to bring an appreciation of natural environments into people's everyday lives.

The park will become the site of events that can be interdisciplinary, interactive, site-specific, multi-sensory, inter-cultural, and intergenerational events. We can encourage visitors of all ages to explore art, nature, and the nature of art.



Example of a sculptural art piece set into the woods.



An example of a sculptural gateway that might be used to mark the entry to the allée.



Example of how an artwork alongside a pathway can be placed as a "to-be" discovery.

Implementation

Phasing & Schedule

The park's development will be phased as funding becomes available. Initial work will include improving site access, signage, pathways, and ecological restoration. Currently, a grant from the United States Department of Aviation through its O'Hare Modernization Project is supporting the restoration and enhancement of at least 15 acres of wetlands. Additional funding sources for other elements are continuously pursued.

General Schedule

Planning & Design:	Fall 2014 - Spring 2016
Bidding:	Spring 2016
Construction:	Fall 2016
Management & Monitoring:	Fall 2021

Future Management & Stewardship

After the initial restoration work is completed, on-going site management will be integrated into the Chicago Park District's robust Natural Areas Program. Typical management activities include reducing weedy species, promoting native seed germination, reintroducing natural disturbance patterns, and further enhancement of species diversity and wildlife habitat. Periodic site inspections are invaluable for assessing management success and modifying management practices where needed.

The Chicago Park District Community Stewardship Program has a strong record of accomplishment for recruiting volunteer stewards and supporting their restoration efforts. Community involvement in the management and monitoring of natural areas is essential to ensuring that the community is integrated into the rest of the ecosystem.

Acknowledgements

All of our community meeting attendees and community partners

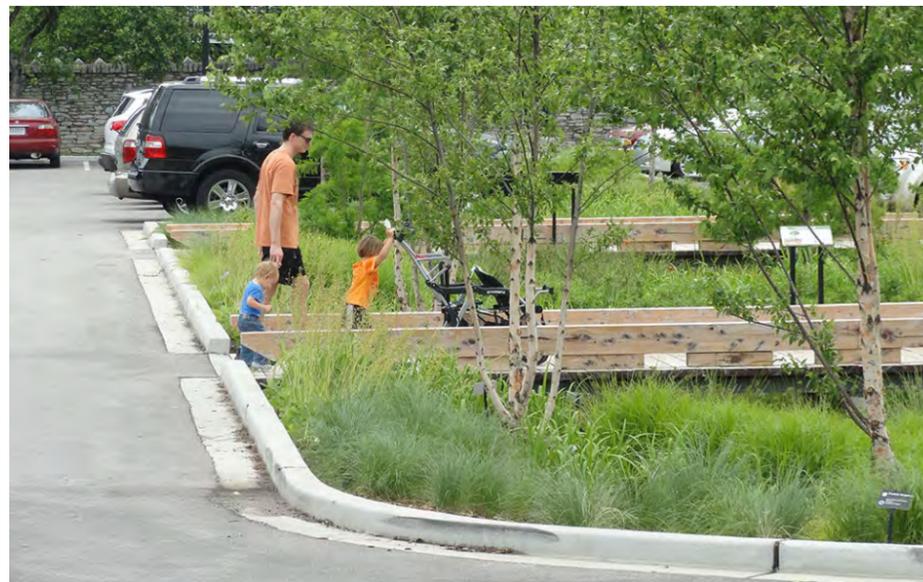
Stakeholder Groups

Argonne National Laboratory
 Audubon Chicago Region
 GreenCorps
 Illinois Department of Natural Resources
 The Field Museum
 The Nature Conservancy
 The Wetlands Initiative
 Southeast Environmental Task Force
 University of Illinois at Chicago
 Urban Wildlife Institute
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Marian R. Byrnes

**Federal Aviation Administration
 O'Hare Modernization Plan**

Parking Lot



- **24 Vehicular Spaces and 2 Bus Stalls**
- **DIVVY Bike Station**

- **Bioswales and Permeable Pavement**
- **Near Restroom and Playgrounds, sled hill, community gardens**

Site Furnishings

The site furniture will assist in conveying the intended narrative of the site. The use of natural unrefined materials will speak to the environmental values and aspirations of the project.

The furnishings by design will be substantial as they will need to be durable and in some cases support multiple functions both active and passive.

The use of Corten, natural weathering steel will evoke local history industrial history. It will also require less maintenance than many other heavily finished materials. The use of heavy duty lumber without preservative or a painted finish will express the ecological identity of the park.

Site furniture can also communicate social messages by providing opportunities for underserved populations such as the elderly

or disabled as access can communicate inclusiveness.

The location of tables and benches will be critical to support social interaction. They should be placed in relationship to events, social spaces such as near the community gardens and also located to encourage visitors to appreciate particular vistas and habitats.



Active Elements





Multi-use Path



Climbing Boulders



Sledding Hill



Natural Playground (Ages 2-5)



Natural Playground (Ages 5-12)



Community Gardens



Restroom



Natural Playground (Ages 2-5)



Natural Playground (Ages 5-12)