



**GLENCOE BEACH and
LAKEFRONT ADVISORY GROUP**

Mission and Vision Statement

*for the Glencoe Beach
and Lakefront Park*

**Presentation to the
*Glencoe Park District Board of Commissioners***

December 18, 2012

Introduction

Glencoe's beaches, bluffs, and Lakefront Park are spectacular assets in a remarkable town. Being a lakefront community gives Glencoe an important part of its identity. Our lake front parks connect our village to Lake Michigan, and give us environmental, recreational, and essential water resources. The Glencoe Beach and Lakefront Park is the main access point to Lake Michigan for residents and patrons who do not live directly on the lake. Lake Michigan, which borders four states and links Glencoe through the Great Lakes ecosystem, the world's largest fresh water basin, to larger regions of the US and Canada. This connection is true of only a handful of Illinois municipalities. Our lakefront beaches at the Glencoe Beach are the crown jewels of the Glencoe Park District. They contribute to Glencoe's high quality of life and the uniqueness of our community.

It is imperative our long-term plans recognize, retain and protect Glencoe's lakefront beaches, bluffs, ravines and by extension, preserve and protect the water quality of Lake Michigan, which we drink and use for recreation.

The Glencoe Beach and Lakefront Advisory Group is very supportive of Park District staff, and appreciative of our facilities and natural environment at the Beach. Observations, ideas and suggestions are meant in the spirit of helping the Park District in its goal of continuous improvement. We are thankful to the Glencoe Park District Board and staff for the opportunity to consider our advice to help enhance this amenity that all of us on the Advisory Group care so deeply about.

Natural Environment

Mission Statement:

To preserve the serenity, natural beauty, vistas, and ecosystems of our lakefront parks, bluffs, overlooks, ravines, beaches, and shoreline, in order to encourage Glencoe residents, patrons and visitors to come the beach.

Assets:

Glencoe's Lakefront Park is centrally located in our Village, within sight and walking distance of our historic train station. It is shaded by heritage oaks, and Glencoe Park District staff skillfully maintain the park, trees, and open landscape. The Lakefront Park crosses between Hazel and Park Avenues, and offers a balance of active and passive uses, with pathways, benches, and picnic tables. It provides access to spectacular vistas of Lake Michigan and beach shoreline, copious open space, yet also includes a tot-lot and tennis courts next to the Park Ave street-end turnaround. Other assets include drinking fountains, fully accessible walks and overlooks, attractive plantings, and an appropriate amount of free parking and bicycle racks for those who cannot walk to the beach. Trash and recycling receptacles help allow patrons to keep the park clean.

Beautiful low limestone walls, benches, and intelligent flower plantings enhance Park and Hazel Avenue bluff overlooks. Trees are trimmed to provide open vistas of the lake.

The ecosystem immediately below the bluff was cleared years ago and native plants restored, bringing a mélange of flowers, insects, and birds.

The Glencoe Beach's open shoreline provides unobstructed views of Lake Michigan, with swimming, sailing and water treatment plant beach infrastructure set back into the toe of the bluffs. The Beach and Lakefront Park are wonderful assets for neighbors, residents, patrons and visitors.

Observation:

The littoral drift of formerly underwater sand has recently increasing the square footage of sand space on the beach, while making swim areas shallower.

What's Working:

Serenity, beauty, ambience, open space, access to the Lake. Long views East and South. A long view North along the shoreline and pier. Natural bluff and waterfront views from the bluff. This natural beauty is a reason for residents and visitors to come to the beach.

What's Not Working:

Built environment competes for space with the natural environment. Long-term plans should, where possible, give the natural environment precedence over structures. Parts of the bluff area are eroded, with damage to the halfway house and stairs. Off path walkers have created scars down the bluff, and restoration efforts are recommended to prevent further erosion. Bluff needs more regular maintenance, including removing invasive plants and plantings to attract and retain diverse species of flora and fauna. In addition, some of the natural area borders at the beach level need attention. Drainage down the bluff above the boating beach access is inadequate, and the Village and the private landowner need to better address storm water outflow to the lake at that point, to preserve stairs, buildings, and hillside and to protect the Lake's water quality.

Ravines and bluffs to the north of the swimming beach should be protected, and pollution from storm water runoff through Village drainage pipes into the lake be addressed, to reduce the number of swimming beach closings that follow summer rainstorms. Naturalistic storm water retention projects might be part of a long-term plan undertaken in cooperation with the Village. (Several studies have shown that storm water runoff into Lake Michigan can be as detrimental to water quality as sanitary sewage.)

Vision of the Future:

Well-planned and maintained natural areas, open spaces, beauty, serenity and vistas. Utilize naturalists to design plantings to recreate indigenous ecosystems to attract insects and birds. Expand this ecosystem as feasible. Plan should balance public access and the management and regulation of crowds on their consequences to natural assets and historic character. Establishment of a long term plan to preserve the bluff and park views, control water runoff and minimize water pollution.

Suggested next steps:

Organize effort for immediate removal of overgrowth on bluff to restore open areas for flowers and vistas. Consult with botany experts to determine best mix of annual and perennial plants to attract desired fauna. Develop regular program of weeding and clearing of unwanted growth at beach level.

Ideas to consider:

Staff should explore protocols for water testing and proactively examine sources of water pollution near the Glencoe Beach, becoming advocates for clean water. This includes consulting with Village staff to understand improve storm water management practices to eliminate or reduce water pollution. Work with Village of Glencoe to improve natural storm water management and reduce beach closures due to pollution. In addition, staff should encourage the Village to develop a program for increased pruning of parkway trees on Park and Hazel to enhance lake views. Finally, planning that impacts the bluff

*Glencoe Beach and Lakefront Advisory Group
Mission and Vision Statement. December 18, 2012*

environment, water runoff or the ðstreet endö beaches owned by the Village should be integrated with planning for the Park District Beach, considering the needs of the residents and patrons who may not live directly on the lakefront.

The district should also have a better understanding of factors impacting rising and falling water levels and the littoral drift in the event that that any changes to the beach and sand footprint are required to maintain the beach and operations environment.

Built Environment

Mission Statement: Provide a limited amount of infrastructure and amenities for waterfront recreational and instructional activities and access the lake and to the shoreline's natural beauty.

Assets: Swimming Beach: Beach house (with showers, bathrooms, guard desk and offices, storage, snack concession and kitchen), Sprayground, volleyball, sun shelters/trellis, rental hut, pier, and swimming area. The pier to the south of the swimming beach is relatively new, and is designed for strolling, with benches and tables for picnicking. It is bordered by an attractive railing. There are trash and recycling receptacles and a public drinking fountain.

Boating beaches (South and North): Boating spaces, lockers, and the boathouse. Lakefront Park bluff overlooks: benches and stonework wall. The stone entry structure (Halfway House) at the midpoint of the bluff beach access, the stone staircase down to the beach house, and the architecturally distinct Safran Beach house are a signature for the Glencoe community and should be regularly maintained and refurbished. Visually the beach structures echo Glencoe's water treatment plant, which sits between our swimming and boating beaches. This structural cohesiveness between Village and Park District-owned buildings is valuable, and should be maintained.

The Park District also owns the beach area immediately south of the pier area (approximately 50 to 100 feet of beach front as a result of a donation to the Park District).

What's Working:

Infrastructure additions (sun shelters/trellis) and improvements (beach house) and limited commercialization (shelter and kayak rentals) have improved the beach-going experience. We have one of the most user-friendly, family-oriented public beaches in Illinois. In 2012, Glencoe PD attracted 600 non-resident beach token subscribers, as families far beyond our village appreciate our public beach and its services.

What's Not Working:

Halfway House and stairs structure need regular inspections and repairs (currently in process). Space on the beach must be organized for swimmer safety, staff flexibility, and non-motorized boating services. Some facilities have outlived their useful life and need to be replaced (South beach shed), or might be relocated to provide additional area on the beach for patron use (south beach driveway to water plant). Long-term plan might address the water plant beaches, which are currently not open to recreational uses. There may be opportunities to do some reconfiguring of the south beach house to increase its utility to patrons. It would be useful to plan to replace current swim beach drinking

fountain with a fountain/water bottle filler station, to help reduce the use of one-use plastic water bottles on the beach.

Vision for the future:

For the most part the Glencoe Beach is fully and sufficiently developed as it is, and long-term plans should **not** include major re-development or structural expansion. For example, a concrete boat launch is not recommended. However, there may be opportunities to enhance the Beach without changing the basic character of the facilities. This may include plans to better design a link between the north and south beaches. Design any new structures with an architectural design consistent with that of the beach house, halfway house and water plant. Where possible, plan technology for wireless communication and water quality testing upgrades within our existing infrastructure.

Suggested Next Steps:

Consider replacing boating storage shed on South Beach with new, more useful structure. Expand the number of boating lockers on the South Beach, which may also be used by swim token holders for beach storage. Consider redesign of boat and locker spaces on both beaches to better utilize beach and storage space. Explore possible educational and interpretive uses (outdoor classroom) of Park District beach directly south of the pier while maintaining its natural character. Review and consider upgrades to Beach House, including installing better drains in shower areas, reconfigured space to possibly reduce footprint of concessions. Consider drinking fountains that allow water bottle re-filling.

In addition, GPD should work with the Village to address drainage pipe overflow issues near stairway to north boating beach.

Ideas to explore:

There are opportunities to do some joint planning with the Village regarding possible use of Water Plant and the surrounding land. The Park District should work with the village to examine opportunities for this space and ensure the Village and Park buildings continue to complement each other. This may include a discussion to better utilize areas directly east of the water plant.

At some point, the Park District Board may want to initiate a formal facilities and open space planning process for the Glencoe Beach and Lakefront Park using a qualified consulting firm, and our Group would welcome the opportunity to contribute to that process. If and when a formal planning process takes place, the Advisory Group would also suggest that the Village be included as a partner in the process, particularly since a Plat of Survey of the total beach area would include pockets of Village owned land within the Beach footprint, including the water plant. Furthermore, for the benefit of all residents, a coordinated Village/Park District open space plan is desirable.

In addition, a planning process should consider options for future use of the 50 to 100 foot Park District owned beach space south of the pier in a manner consistent with the overall direction of the mission and vision document.

The top of the bluff and the Lakefront Park could use a long term plan for benches, foliage, replacement of playground equipment and exercise equipment, and possible repaving of the path with bricks, in order to enhance the look and feel of the Lakefront Park. Connectivity and walkability should be a priority and options to reduce the need for cars (possible tram from train station lots) could be discussed in coordination with the Village.

Consider development of an architectural design policy to ensure new built assets are designed to have a look and feel consistent with the beach house, halfway house and water plant. Finally, continue to explore opportunities for private funding when new built assets are planned.

Programming and Operations

Mission Statement:

Provide safe access to the Lake Michigan shoreline for recreational, educational and skill-building activities, within the context of maintaining the area's natural beauty. Maintain the current high quality of infrastructure without expansion. Provide access to residents and non-residents while maintaining the "hometown" feel of the beach. Uphold high standards of behavior and customer service and also effectively maintaining and enforcing Park District rules. Provide a level of patron experience that scores at a minimum at the "above average" level or better on surveys, and strives for exceeding expectations in all areas.

Assets:

The facility has well-trained beachfront personnel. Our beach and harbor guards, life-saving personnel, managers, and maintenance staff effectively protect beach goers while simultaneously offering friendly and efficient customer service. Our staff makes our beaches work for everyone, and long-term planning should continue to include the highest level of training available.

Sailing instruction is very popular as a stand alone program and within the summer camps. Beach access for a number of summer day camps is a major factor in camper satisfaction. Park District-sponsored family campouts and sleepovers are very popular. 4th of July fireworks at the beach is a Glencoe tradition. The environment at the beach allows for a feeling of inclusiveness. The facilities allow many private and non-profit organization parties and outings.

Observations:

The Park District performed a 2012 beach survey and other surveys with the beach and boating results listed in an appendix. Input from the survey provided direction to the Advisory Group to make a number of observations and suggestions.

What's Working:

Excellent safety and service record by beach staff and administration. The planning process includes an annual survey, and deep dialogue between staff, the Advisory Group and the Board was a big success in preparing for the 2012 season.

Growing summer day camp use of the beach helps the camp program and promotes beach usage. Popular programs for families and group parties in the Trellis receive good reviews. Sun shelters for groups enhance the family feeling at the beach. Live Music programs attract young families. The 4th of July program brings the community together. The Hobie teaching fleet has been upgraded to enhance the sailing programs.

Seasonal staff appeared to be very motivated in 2012, and generally responded well to most situations, and there was sufficient staff throughout the season. Traditional boating beach services (rescue via Jet Ski, staff help) model scored high on the survey. Expansion of the swim area and addition of second lifeguard chair on the swim beach was helpful on busy weekends reducing the need for swimmers to be outside the swim area, creating a clearer boundary between swimmers and boaters. Additional portable facilities also a plus, particularly during the season after the beach house is closed.

The presence of the sailing program was noted as a major factor in satisfaction for summer camp participants in 2012. The broader sailing program creates a colorful visual environment during the summer which enhances the atmosphere for bathers and visitors. The program also helps create adult programming opportunities at the beach in addition to opportunities for youth.

What's Not Working:

Hot summer brought large crowds. Young beach staff were perceived to struggle while enforce rules, including rules against littering and smoking on the beach. Some patrons needed extra prompting, or Public Safety was called to enforce rules. There were safety issues observed with swimmers outside of swimming area remediation needed. There were perceived operational gaps between supervisors and seasonal employees at the boating beach at times.

What's Lacking:

Many Glencoe residents use the beach as our dog park during the off seasons and in summer mornings before the beach staff arrives. Public safety has been sporadically enforcing leash law on beach, and angering residents with dogs. Dogs in swimming area before the 10 am opening and on warm weekends in May and September could raise health concerns.

Glencoe's beach programming does not currently include any patron education about the Great Lakes or the importance of clean water to our communities. Natural environment interpretation for children and adults would enhance our community.

Vision of the Future:

Programming and operations that consistently strives to "exceed expectations" on patron surveys, and that serve community needs. Continue to train and design beach staffing to deal with rule enforcement at the same time as continuing excellent safety and service training. Recognize that out-of-town fee payers balance the beach budget every year. Deepen partnership with Public Safety by hosting joint trainings and allowing Beach and Public safety supervisors regular consultations. New programs for environmental conservation, water quality, and ecosystems planning for adults and youth. Youth programming could be developed in cooperation with teachers in Glencoe District 35.

Suggested Next Steps:

Review and enhance staffing model to ensure greater on-site presence of full time manager and seasonal managers at the bathing and boating beaches especially during peak patron times. Continue maintenance of an enrichment environment with seasonal staff combined with on-site and active mid management supervision throughout the full season. Evaluate and enhance management approach regarding expectations of seasonal staff including the peer supervisory model.

Review policies related to how the Halfway House admission process is managed including rules and consequences; enforcing prohibition on auto traffic during peak patron times; connectivity with Public Safety and mature seasonal staff for enforcement. Consider addition of more mature Beach Services personnel to support younger staff in enforcement situations.

Continue waterfront Safety training and preparation at a high level. Emphasis on customer service training should also be continued. Implementation of comments in previous paragraph should help improve attentiveness and responsiveness to levels that exceed expectations.

Develop comprehensive program for reviewing signage protocols at the beach, Lakefront Park and tennis courts and recommend permanent solutions.

Review system for admittance for day passes including evaluation of enhancements to the process. Consider development of a plan for skeleton staffing of the south beach house for warm weekends in late May and early September. Continue to provide extra beach staff for the last day of school for Glencoe District 35's school children (and other nearby school districts as applicable), who often flock to the beach and the water without supervision on the day school lets out. Consider revising harbormaster staffing models to station a harbormaster on the South boating beach during peak patron times.

There is a need for more regular trash collection on peak patron times, and a more rational system for getting the separated recycling up the hill and into a recycling bin.

Replace the damaged Jet Ski to maintain current levels of responsiveness in rescue situations. As a safety measure, rescue fleet should always include two jet skis. Increase the Hobie Getaway fleet to a number of boats that enable all sailing program students to be trained on the same type of boat at the same time.

The policies around marketing and fee levels generated from beach operations should be managed to enable the beach to at a minimum be a self sustaining operation from the perspective of its contribution margin, considering all direct and indirect sources of revenue, and allocating only direct costs related to seasonal beach operations (not including overhead, capital costs or expenditures, or routine park maintenance).

Ideas to explore:

Continue to further examine water testing policies and protocols. Evaluate possible options for beach closing policies. Continue to investigate options for same day water testing. Continue to communicate with state agencies to modify water testing protocols to allow same day testing and opening/closing decisions.

Develop an approach to understand and predict patron attendance patterns and develop an operational and staffing model to differentiate operational needs between peak times and other times. Explore staffing levels including availability of senior staff, security, parking and traffic controls. Determine if and when overcrowding is impacting operations and develop protocols to respond accordingly on a real time basis. Evaluate alternative solutions for parking and traffic for peak patron times. Explore satellite parking and shuttle from train station of peak summer weekends.

Consider moving the swim beach area slightly south to take advantage of the wide stretch of shoreline between the south end of the swim beach and the pier, if possible. Such a move should leave ample clearance safety purposes. Also explore use of ölap lanesö where feasible.

Consider better use of some of the boat space area on the north beach to increase capacity for rental spaces.

Facilities staff should proactively work closely with the recreation staff to develop and market additional weekday programs that encourage residents and patrons to use the beach, including adult exercise classes, yoga, etc. Also, staff can consider beach programs in the fall, and spring.

Review and improve rental hut operations. Create a better system to encourage boat rentals and skippered rentals during peak patron times. The development of a junior fleet program should be encouraged.

Evaluate the current concession arrangement and determine if it meets the needs of patrons in terms of quality and pricing. Consider limiting food, and picnicking, to tables, trellises and pier to avoid bird pests and droppings on beach.

Glencoe Park District should continue to utilize intergovernmental arrangements where appropriate and could consider dog park partnership with Northbrook in exchange for resident rate beach and sailing access, and/or should explore other options utilizing a dog park to serve this community need.