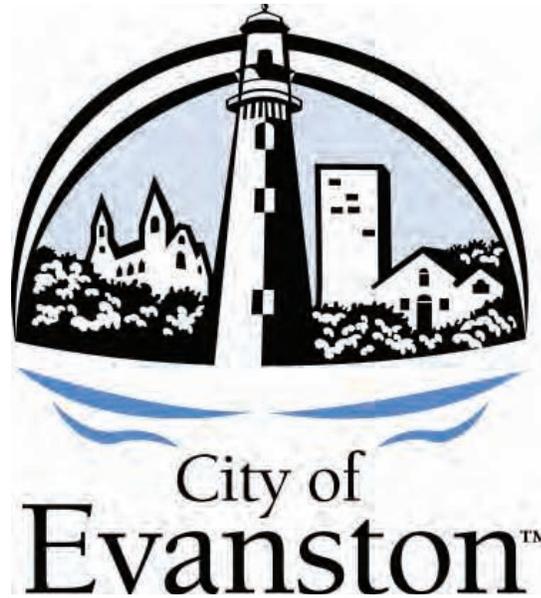




City of  
**Evanston**<sup>TM</sup>







# Lakefront Master Plan

Parks / Forestry & Recreation Department  
City of Evanston  
2100 Ridge Avenue  
Evanston, Illinois 60201  
847.328.2100

June 2008

prepared by

EDAW

in association with

CTE Engineers  
McGuire Igleski & Associates Inc.  
URBANWorks, Ltd.  
Wolf Landscape Architecture, Inc.

# Acknowledgements

## Parks / Forestry & Recreation

Julia A. Caroll

City Manager

Douglas Gaynor

Director of Parks / Forestry & Recreation

Paul D'Agostino

Superintendent of Parks / Forestry

Bob Dorneker

Superintendent of Recreation

Stefanie Levine, RLA

Parks/Forestry Project Manager

Lorraine H. Morton

Mayor

Ald. Cheryl Wollin

1st Ward

Ald. Lionel Jean-Baptiste

2nd Ward

Ald. Melissa A. Wynne

3rd Ward

Ald. Steven J. Bernstein

4th Ward

Ald. Delores A. Holmes

5th Ward

Ald. Edmund B. Moran, Jr.

6th Ward

Ald. Elizabeth B. Tisdahl

7th Ward

Ald. Ann Rainey

8th Ward

Ald. Anjana Hansen

9th Ward

The Parks / Forestry & Recreation Department  
would also like to recognize the  
residents of Evanston for their attendance at the public meetings and  
their contributions to the Lakefront Master Plan.

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## Executive Summary

The Evanston lakefront park system is a very special environment, providing the community with a range of active and passive recreational opportunities, including beaches, playgrounds, flexible green space, trails, and a range of boating facilities. Additionally, several historic structures located on the waterfront create a sense of place that embodies the character of Evanston, and the parks are framed by beautiful single and multi-family homes that overlook Lake Michigan. In some areas, however, the lakefront parks are showing signs of being “loved to death”, and the City of Evanston has recognized the need to create a master plan to ensure that the parks continue to provide high quality amenities that meet the needs of the community long into the future. In addition to providing a clear strategy for future park projects and improvements, the plan will assist the City in making the most of its limited financial resources while providing an effective tool that will support additional fund raising and grant application efforts. Finally, the City of Evanston has recognized the need to reduce the impact of human activities on the environment through more energy efficient structures and systems, expansion of more diverse park landscapes, and encouragement of alternative forms of transportation.

### Process

The first step in this process was the development of the Lakefront Vision, completed in early 2007 by a consulting team led by Hitchcock Design Group. The Lakefront Vision was developed through an extensive public outreach process that engaged a wide variety of community stakeholders and established a clear vision for the master plan. The Evanston Lakefront Master Plan was developed through an iterative design process that tested a wide range of ideas and strategies for achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the Lakefront Vision. Three initial concept alternatives were developed and presented to the community. These concepts were refined based on the comments received from the community, and the preferred elements were included in two new concepts. These concepts were presented to the community, and further refined into a single “Draft Consensus Plan” based on community input. Following four presentations of the Draft Consensus Plan in locations throughout Evanston, a number of significant revisions were made, resulting in the Final Consensus Plan that was presented to the City Council and approved in January of 2008. This master plan document further describes this process and outlines in detail all elements of the plan.

### Elements

A range of master plan elements are proposed throughout the lakefront parks. These elements include broad strategies that inform more detailed design decisions outlined in the discussions of each segment of the lakefront park system. These elements include sustainable design strategies such as proposing that all new buildings achieve a minimum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating of Silver, and providing park lighting that implements “Dark Sky” design strategies and significantly reduces energy use by using LED light fixtures. Landscape strategies are proposed that support an appropriate balance of flexible green space with expansion of native plant ecosystems that require less maintenance and provide habitat.

Accessibility for park users of all abilities is proposed, along with dedicated bicycle and pedestrian pathways throughout the lakefront. Improved pedestrian

access to the lakefront is provided by traffic calming measures intended to reduce vehicle speeds on Sheridan Road to the posted limits, while reducing the length of pedestrian crossings. Connections to all adjacent segments of the City of Evanston Bicycle trail network are proposed.

Improvements to vehicular circulation and problematic intersections are proposed that are intended to reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and ease way-finding. Existing parking lots are reconfigured to increase efficiency without an overall increase in parking counts or paved area, and off-street parking facilities are proposed to be paved in pervious materials that will reduce stormwater quantities and improve water quality. Modifications to the existing rock shoreline protection system are proposed, with the intent to improve visual access to the lake, reduce the negative visual impact of the rocks, and maintain access control to the waters edge.

### **Master Plan Areas**

The master plan outlines specific recommendations for each parcel or use area along the lakefront. The plans includes specific recommendations for park improvements that provide a broader range of activities for different age groups, such as the Great Lawn that provides lakeside access and flexible green space, or the dedicated bicycle and pedestrian paths that provide accessible routes to all amenities on the lakefront. Specific improvements are proposed to restore popular but worn facilities such as the public boat launch, while also using these improvements to take advantage of littoral drift to make the dog beach less susceptible to rising water levels.

Existing historic elements on the lakefront, such as the lagoon and nearby lagoon building, are preserved and existing nearby conflicting uses are relocated to create a more gracious landscape space around the heart of Evanston's lakefront. Improvements to the lagoon promenade that re-use old street pavers maintain the historic character of the area while minimizing the impacts on the landscape from summer festivals. Lunt Park and Patriots Park, adjacent to the lakefront but separated from the rest of the parks by streets, retain distinct identities but are proposed to be more closely connected to the lakefront parks via improved pedestrian connections.

New restroom structures will replace the outdated existing structures that do not meet federal accessibility requirements. The new structures will establish beach entry points and are located near vehicular drop-offs that support public transit opportunities. These structures will be energy efficient, responsive to the historic character of the lakefront, and provide improved facilities for life-guard staff and the community.

Renovations to existing park facilities, such as Clark Square or Garden Park, will maintain their historic use and character, while the existing landscape will be supplemented with native species that provide habitat for migratory birds, beautiful native gardens, and an understory landscape that helps define park rooms and uses. Outdated play equipment will be replaced with a play environment that celebrates the special location overlooking Lake Michigan. Imaginative play elements will allow children to create their own games and invent new worlds in place of prescriptive play equipment with defined uses.

At the southernmost end of Evanston, the master plan seeks to restore the

amazing experience of driving along Lake Michigan on Sheridan Road. The narrowing of Sheridan Road, coupled with the expansion of green space and lowered rock revetment will create an open, gracious space that welcomes visitors. No landscape or architectural monument could provide a more compelling entry statement for the City of Evanston than a clear view of Lake Michigan.







## **Evanston Lakefront Vision**

The Evanston Lakefront Vision is the result of a series of focus group sessions and a public workshop lead by the City of Evanston Parks / Forestry and Recreation Department and the consultant team of Hitchcock Design Group, The Institute of Cultural Affairs and Merry Green Promotions Group. The visions, goals and objectives in the Lakefront Vision represent the accrued consensus of visioning participants. Participants included a focus group of community stakeholders representing a wide range of interests, as well as members of the public who were invited to participate in workshop sessions.

The master plan team used the Lakefront Vision as the basis for establishing the initial range of programmatic elements and developing the initial design concepts. One of the key assumptions of the master plan was to value the efforts put forth by the community to share their time and opinions to help create the Vision, and the master plan process would respect the results of that Vision and seek to achieve its goals and implement its objectives.

### **Overall Vision**

“The Evanston Lakefront will carry forward as a unique and sustainable environment that supports the highest and best use of the public lake frontage and respects the delicate balance of its natural ecosystems and user interest.”

The Evanston lakefront is unique in its openness and accessibility when compared to other communities along the north shore, and is one of the most compelling reasons people choose to live in Evanston. The majority of Evanston’s shoreline is open to the public, and the long continuous stretches of parks, beaches, and open space create a wide range of recreational opportunities in an unparalleled lakefront environment.

What is a “sustainable” environment? The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainability as: “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The master plan process created a public forum for discussion among the residents of Evanston to define the aspects of sustainable design that should be implemented, and to define the highest and best use of its lakefront.

The phrase “respects the delicate balance of its natural ecosystems and user interest” nicely summarizes the primary goal of this master plan. The master plan strikes a balance between these conflicting aims in a reasonable way, as defined by the community. While there was a wide range of voices contributing to the plan, many of them calling for significantly more habitat and removal of existing programmed activity, in the end the community recognized that this is a place for people as well as the environment. As Will McDonough states in the first of the Hannover Principles (The Hannover Principles outline the sustainability goals of the 2000 World Expo, and are regarded as sound principles for sustainable design), we must “Insist on the rights of humanity and nature to coexist in a healthy, supportive, diverse, and sustainable condition.” Our society is on the road to creating a more sustainable condition, and this plan takes measurable steps towards this goal.

### **Evanston Lakefront Vision Goals and Objectives**

The Lakefront Vision is described in five elements, including Natural Environment, Access & Circulation, Program Offerings, Facilities, and Administration &

Policy. Within each of these elements, the Vision establishes a concept statement, goal, and series of objectives. The master plan responds to each of these goals and objectives, and the specific actions and recommendations proposed by the master plan are outlined below.

### **Natural Environment**

“The lakefront’s natural environment is comprised of a unique and sensitive set of ecological systems that require careful stewardship. It will be enhanced and maintained as a habitat for plant and animal communities as well as a valuable asset for Evanston residents and visitors.”

### ***Goal 1: Establish practices and policies to preserve and enhance the lakefront’s natural environment.***

#### **Objectives:**

- ❑ Enhance natural areas for wildlife habitat and passive enjoyment.
  - “Magic Hedge” style landscape plantings have been included at Garden, Clark Square, Lincoln Street Overlook, and Lighthouse parks.
  - “Upland Prairie” native grass plantings have been included near Greenwood Beach, Patriots, Lunt, and Lighthouse parks.
- ❑ Create natural buffers between lakefront transition areas.
  - “Dune Ecology” native grass plantings separate turf areas from beaches throughout the plan.
  - “Magic Hedge” and understory plantings are similarly used to define “landscape rooms” within larger open space areas.
  - Bioswales separate and screen parking areas, while treating stormwater runoff
- ❑ Restore natural dune habitat along specified areas of the lakefront
  - “Dune Ecology” plantings are shown throughout the lakefront, buffering the beaches from turf areas.
  - Non-native species will be removed from the existing dune ecology east of the Water treatment plan, and further restoration is proposed.
- ❑ Develop and install a planting regime emphasizing native, or non-native, zone tolerant landscape plants to improve lakefront aesthetics and decrease required landscape maintenance.
  - All species proposed will be native, or adapted zone-tolerant species.
  - Less-used turf areas will be converted to dune or prairie plantings, which - while requiring intensive maintenance to establish - result in lower maintenance costs, irrigation demand, and fertilizer demand over time.
  - A strategy for “underplanting” the existing mature tree canopy with appropriate tree species will ensure that the mature tree canopy endures over time as existing trees die-off or are damaged.
- ❑ Dedicate an area of undisturbed (not mown, etc.) lakefront space as a bird sanctuary.
  - The area east of the Water Treatment plant will be off limits to people except possible guided tours.
  - Other areas near Patriot’s and Lunt Park will have not mown native grasses, but will not exclude people.
- ❑ Maintain the lakefront in accordance with environmentally sustainable best management practices.
  - A strategy for landscape maintenance that minimizes use of pesticides and fertilizers is proposed, along with alternate strategies such as

organic composting.

- Evaluate natural or engineered shoreline stabilization systems, including off-shore islands, reefs, peninsulas, and/or headlands, which might selectively replace existing rock revetment.
  - A technical analysis of various stabilization options has been reviewed.
  - Based on cost, technical considerations, environmental impact and aesthetic concerns, off-shore islands, reefs, peninsulas and/or headlands have not been proposed.
  - Proposals toward an incremental reduction in the height and quantity of existing rock revetment have been included. The initial step is a comprehensive evaluation of the existing lakefront protection system by a qualified coastal engineer. Primary issues are the determination of defensible lake level and storm event criteria, which determine the size and extent of the structures required. Following an evaluation that determines acceptable heights, we propose:
    - ▷ Lowering the height of much of the revetment to allow visual access to the lake.
    - ▷ Removal of revetment entirely where possible, such as areas protected by groins or other structures.
    - ▷ Use of dune landscape to create natural transition between zones

### Access and Circulation

Planning for access and circulation at the lakefront should include a comprehensive strategy to emphasize both connecting the greater Evanston community to the lakefront, as well as improving and connecting trail systems within lakefront parks and open spaces.

#### Goal 2:

***Create a strategy to improve multi-use trail conditions minimizing traffic conflict and emphasizing community connections for all trail users.***

#### Objectives:

- Evaluate and improve multi-use trails through the lakefront park system.
  - Distinct trail systems for both bicycles and pedestrians have been proposed.
- Provide adequate trail lighting with sensitivity to both security and dark-sky issues.
  - Dark-sky (“cut-off”) compatible light fixtures have been proposed, utilizing low energy demand technologies such as LED or Induction lamps.
- Construct unobtrusive way-finding signage along the lakefront including directional signage, maps and distance markers.
  - A comprehensive signage system is proposed.
- Increase and improve secure bicycle parking along the lakefront.
  - Improved bike racks are proposed throughout the lakefront, especially at access points such as restrooms and facilities.
- Consider creating separate paths for joggers / walkers and bikers / roller bladers.
  - Distinct trail systems for both bicycles and pedestrians have been proposed.
- Improve lakefront trail connection to downtown Evanston.
  - Improvements to the pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Davis and Forest should be included in any future improvement

- Significant improvements to pedestrian crossings at Clark, and Church streets are proposed, along with traffic calming strategies such as “bump-outs”, which will reduce the pedestrian exposure to vehicular traffic from 40 feet or more to 24 feet.
- Bike trail connections to the Evanston Bike Plan are provided.
- Improve southern trail connection to Chicago.
  - The elimination of unnecessary traffic lanes on Sheridan Road creates the opportunity to provide separate pedestrian and bike paths east of Sheridan, as well as on street bike lanes on Sheridan. Alternate strategies are provided should the traffic analysis require keeping all four lanes of Sheridan.
- Improve connections between lakefront and Northwestern University trail system
  - The trail connection between the lakefront and Northwestern is maintained.

### **Goal 3:**

***Coordinate transportation resources to improve lakefront-user access while preserving the integrity of lakefront open space and natural areas.***

#### Objectives:

- Evaluate and improve lakefront parking without designating additional space for parking.
  - Proposed lakefront parking improvements include:
    - ▷ Upgrade of existing pavement sections to pervious paving, reducing peak storm surge.
    - ▷ Upgrade of existing pavement to accepted standard dimensions where necessary, without impacting existing trees.
    - ▷ Protection of users and clear designation of parking areas through traffic calming measures.
    - ▷ Maintain existing distributed character of parking along entire lakefront.
    - ▷ No new parking is provided, with essentially the same quantity of parking maintained.
    - ▷ Improvements to the aesthetic character of the existing boat parking are proposed, along with use of pervious paving and bio-swale treatment of initial stormwater runoff.
- Consider permit policy for parking lots immediately adjacent to the lake front.
  - Parking management improvements will be proposed.
- Evaluate and improve public transportation access from greater Evanston to the lakefront.
  - Access points for public transportation have been provided at Greenwood and Clark Street Beaches, as well as the Lagoon area.
- Consider providing shuttle service from downtown parking areas to the lakefront.
  - Access points for public transportation have been provided at Greenwood and Clark Street Beaches, as well as the Lagoon area.
  - Proposals for shared parking are proposed.
- Evaluate improving access for boaters to the lakefront from Lake Michigan.
  - Comprehensive evaluation and modernization of the existing boat ramp is proposed.

- The boat ramp is proposed to stay in its current location, with no proposed changes to use policies. (No day-use passes, etc.)
- Integrate lakefront trail system with existing Evanston Bike Plan.
  - Bike trail connections to the Evanston Bike Plan are provided.
- Improve bike and pedestrian connections from the lakefront to adjacent neighborhoods.
  - Significant pedestrian safety improvements are proposed throughout, including crosswalks and traffic calming strategies.
  - Proposed trail systems respond to neighborhood points of access.

### Facilities

Lakefront facilities will promote the highest and best use of the lakefront through the creation and maintenance of lakefront appropriate facilities. They will support activities of Evanston residents and visitors, be of high-quality, and emphasize environmental and architectural sensitivity.

#### Goal 4:

***Assess existing park facilities and upgrade or replace depending on condition and need. Implement new facilities where there is demand while honoring the lakefront’s environmental integrity and surrounding neighborhoods.***

#### Objectives:

- Provide adequate lighting for park facilities, with sensitivity to both security and dark-sky issues. Consider energy efficient alternatives such as solar-power or LED lighting.
  - Dark-sky (“cut-off”) compatible light fixtures have been proposed, utilizing low energy demand technologies such as LED or Induction lamps.
- Create cohesive, high-quality design scheme for new site amenities including buildings, lighting, signage, benches, trash receptacles, and picnic facilities.
  - A complete “kit-of-parts” for all site furnishings that complements the design of existing and proposed structures will be provided.
- Renovate, or if necessary, reconstruct, existing restroom facilities and beach houses, including evaluation of relocating facilities to optimize their use and access.
  - The existing restroom structure at Lighthouse Beach is proposed to be completely renovated, and an additional structure on the south side of the existing ramp is proposed to provide equipment storage for the lifeguard staff, minor concession space, and space for the staff to control entry and collect fees.
  - The Lighthouse facility is recommended to be LEED
  - The historic Lagoon Building shall remain
  - All other restroom structures are proposed to be replaced with LEED Silver or better structures.
  - New restroom structures will be relocated to provide points of entry to each beach, as well as to serve both beach and park users.
- Improve and modernize existing boat facilities to support boater use.
  - Existing non-motorized boat storage facilities are proposed to be upgraded, with new storage racks designed specifically for the various types of watercraft, increasing the number of boats that can be stored

- while using less space.
- Comprehensive evaluation and modernization of the existing boat ramp is proposed.
- Consider increasing the number of carry-in access points for non-motorized watercraft.
  - A “water trail” is proposed, which will create points of access for visiting non-motorized watercraft at each beach.
  - Allowances for additional carry-in access points are still under consideration, and is primarily a policy issue. No additional parking is proposed to support additional access.
- Develop an effective plan for a new emergency response system.
  - Proposed improvements include:
    - ▷ Lifeguard storage, office, and communication facilities will be provided with new/renovated restroom facilities at each beach.
    - ▷ Improved access and storage for waterfront emergency craft is proposed.
    - ▷ Additional foot or bicycle patrols of the lakefront may be considered.
- Evaluate demand for concession facilities and implement temporary or seasonal facilities if needed.
  - Public feedback has suggested that minor concession facilities associated with new restroom structures are acceptable. “Minor” facilities have been described as prepackaged or refrigerated foods, drinks, and necessities such as sunscreen, while excluding significant facilities such as grills or kitchens.

### Programming

Evanston’s lakefront programming will preserve the lakefront’s unique natural environment by balancing passive and active recreational uses. Future programming for the lakefront will be based on the highest and best use of Evanston’s lake frontage.

#### Goal 5:

***Emphasize a balance between natural unprogrammed lakefront with a variety of lakefront appropriate activity programming to engage all users and generate limited revenue, while honoring the lakefront’s environmental integrity and surrounding neighborhoods.***

#### Objectives:

- Dedicate lakefront space that is unprogrammed and conducive to a quiet natural environment.
  - Significant areas of unprogrammed, quiet spaces have been proposed throughout the lakefront.
- Expand lakefront opportunity for non-motorized recreational lake use, such as swimming, kayaking, canoeing, and sailing.
  - Increased capacity for storage of watercraft is proposed, along with more access to the lakefront through the water trail proposal.
  - Expanded swim beach areas may be considered.
- Consider increasing restrictions on motorized boat use.
  - There are clear groups who support maintaining the existing boat ramp, and additional groups that support eliminating the boat ramp.
  - The majority favors maintaining the boat ramp in its current location, but improving its functionality to minimize long term maintenance

- costs.
  - Proposed management of the boat launch facility to enforce the highest standards of safety, behavior, and best practices to prevent potential pollution (no fuelling of watercraft, for example) are included.
- Encourage lakefront community and cultural events by providing dedicated areas along the lakefront.
  - Community and cultural events are supported by providing an improved lagoon promenade that allows festivals to occur with reduced impact to the park landscape and attendant maintenance and repair issues. Re-use of existing stocks of brick road pavers would be in character with the historic nature of the Lagoon area, while providing a pervious surface of re-used materials that meet sustainability objectives.
  - The proposed Great Lawn provides ample opportunity for community and cultural events.
- Develop recreational and educational programming that serves all Evanston residents and visitors throughout the year.
  - Additional programs are proposed, including guided habitat tours, bird watching opportunities, and interpretive signage.
- Focus on educational and recreational program offerings that are appropriate to the lakefront and do not require extensive facility construction.
  - The proposed educational activities outlined above require little more than appropriate landscape plantings and signage.
  - Additional educational facility construction is limited primarily to landscape improvements or upgrading of existing facilities. All new proposed structures would be LEED Silver or better.

### **Administration and Policy**

Lakefront policies and administration will promote equitable access for users, including fee schedules and barrier free physical access (per federal and state accessibility laws) all framed within a financially responsible plan for lakefront maintenance and administration.

### **Goal 6:**

***Develop and implement lakefront policies that support and fund a balance of high-quality lakefront appropriate programming and promote physical and financial accessibility for all users.***

### **Objectives:**

- Devise and implement a plan and policy to dedicate passive and active spaces at the lakefront.
  - A balance of passive and active spaces is provided.
- Upgrade all lakefront facilities to comply with federal ADA and state IAC accessibility laws.
  - All existing facilities will be renovated or replaced to meet ADA and IAC requirements
  - All areas of the park, and all amenities, will be made accessible by paved pathways.
  - All beaches will be made accessible via flexible decking.
- Evaluate policies addressing commercial use of the lakefront.
  - No “private” commercial uses are proposed.
  - Minor “public” commercial uses are proposed, including small

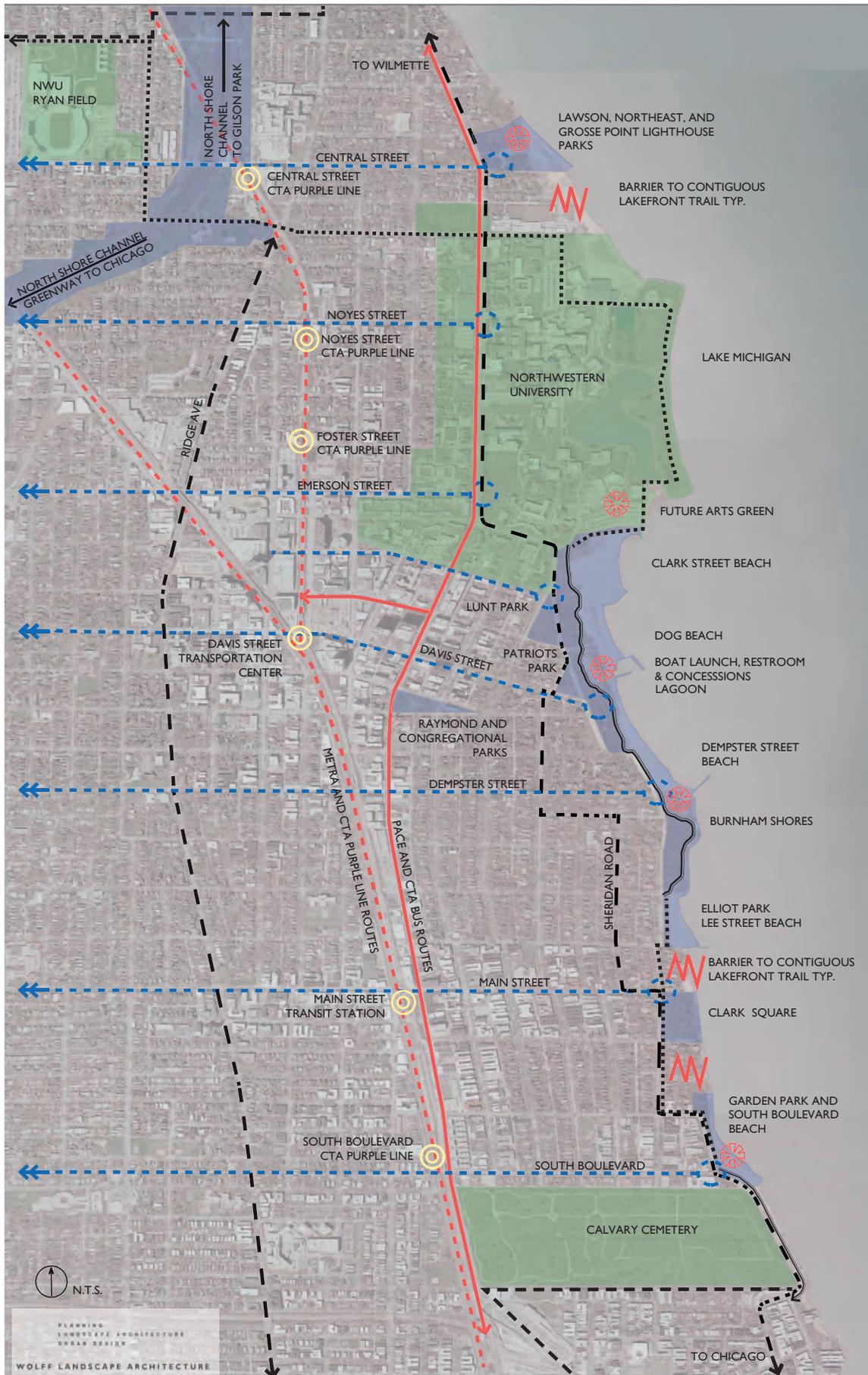
concession facilities at new restrooms, and a small gift shop or café intended to supplement funding for maintenance of the Evanston Arts Center.

- ❑ Program and fund an adequate maintenance schedule for lakefront facilities (e.g. restrooms) and landscaping.
  - Strategies are proposed to minimize the costs and maintenance requirements for the lakefront.
- ❑ Evaluate park facility operating hours and adjust to suit users' needs.
  - Ongoing hours of operations will be determined by user's needs and within the limitations of funding.
- ❑ Evaluate extending restroom operating hours to include all seasons.
  - Extending hours of operations will be determined by user's needs and within the limitations of funding.
  - All new facilities will be capable of year round use, without requiring complex winterization.
- ❑ Create policy (including a review of water access fees) that balances economic sustainability and access affordability.
- ❑ Recommend that the City include the entire Evanston lakefront, including private property, as part of the master plan.
  - The entire lakefront has been considered in this plan.
  - No new requirements have been proposed for private property, although potential recommendations for voluntary habitat enhancement will be provided.

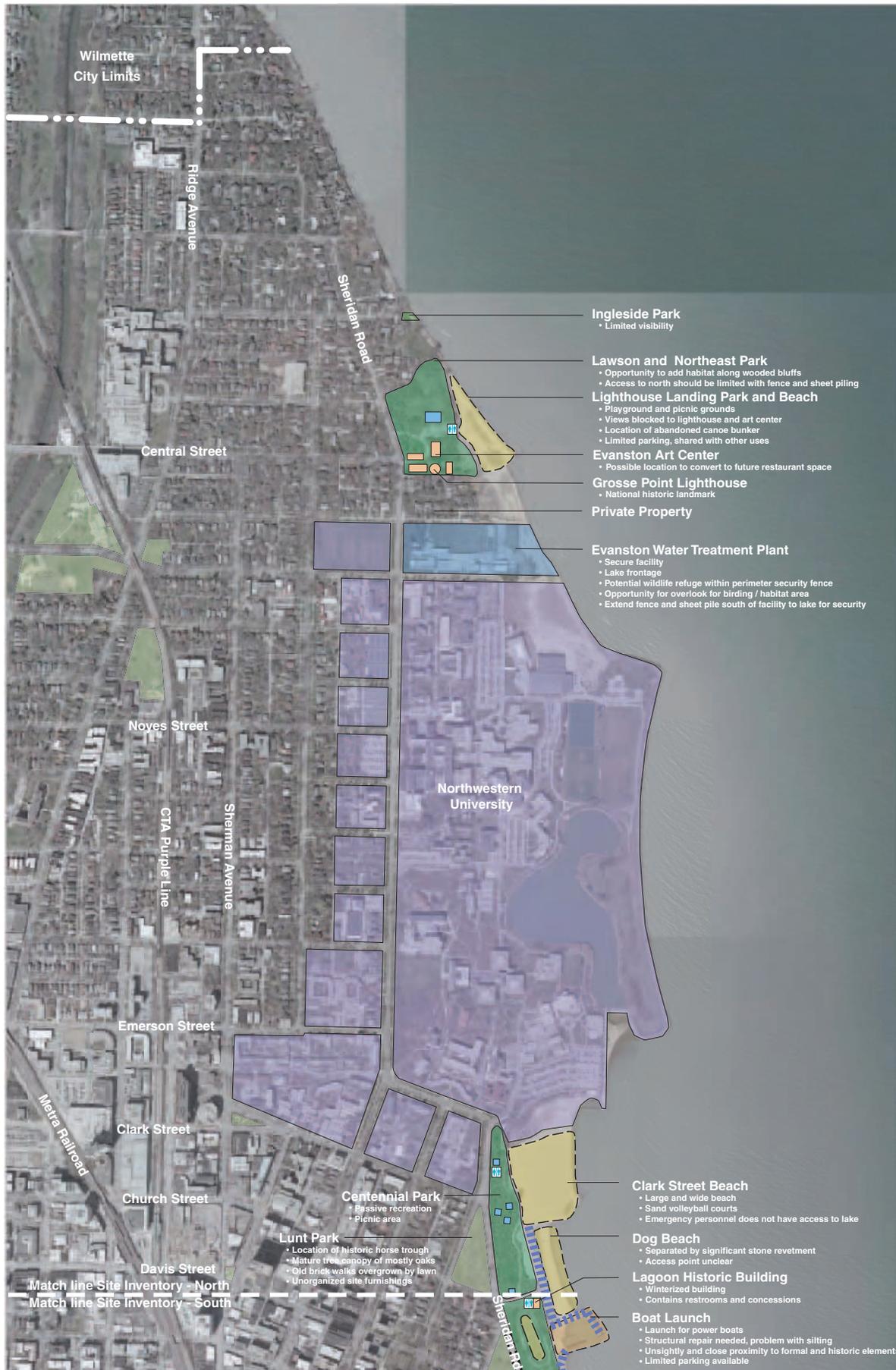




# Existing Conditions



# Site Inventory - North



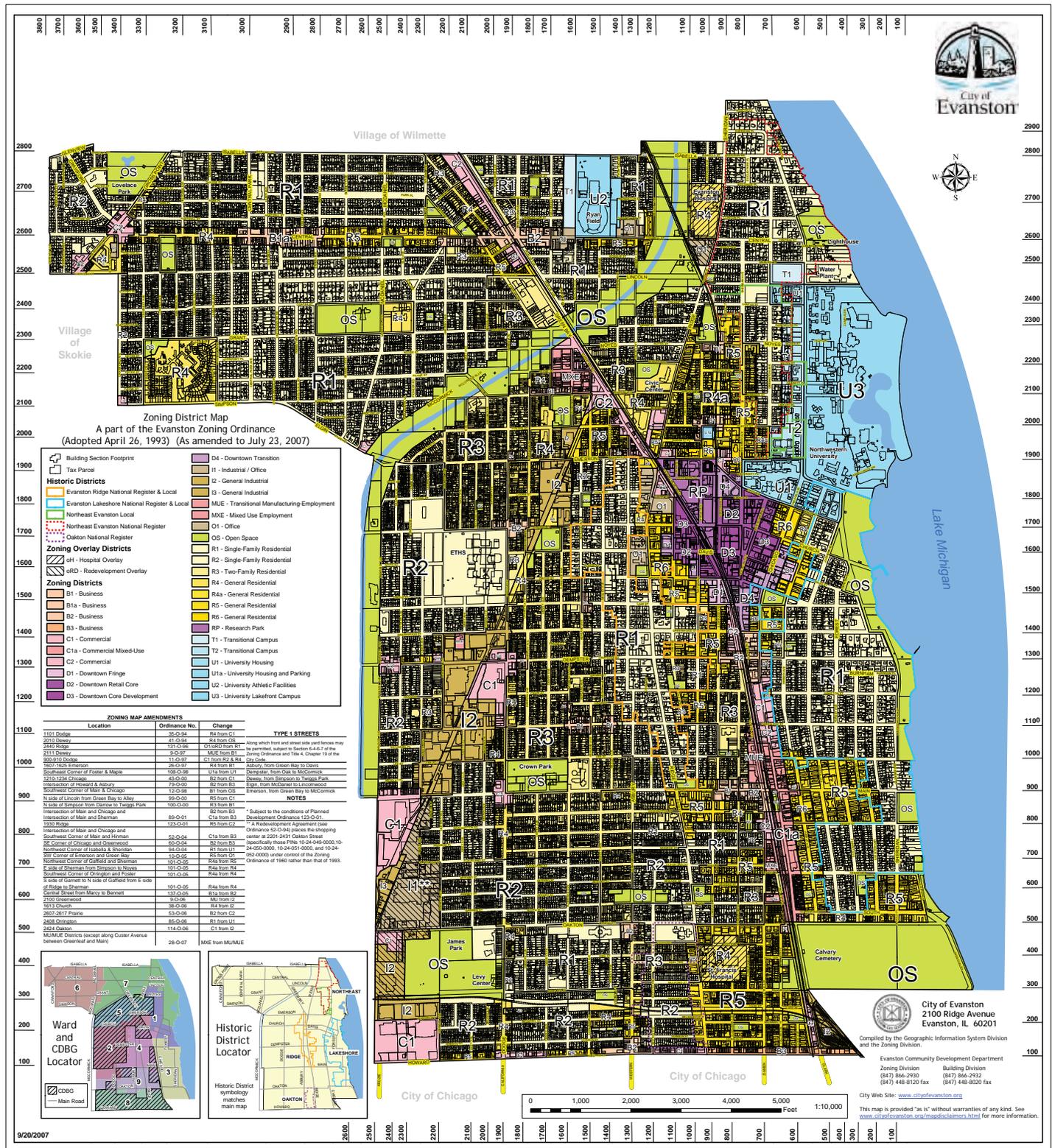
- Legend**
- Structure
  - Picnic and play areas
  - Restroom
  - Stone revetment
  - Beach
  - Boat storage and launching facilities
  - Lakefront park
  - Inland park

- Ingleside Park**
  - Limited visibility
- Lawson and Northeast Park**
  - Opportunity to add habitat along wooded bluffs
  - Access to north should be limited with fence and sheet piling
- Lighthouse Landing Park and Beach**
  - Playground and picnic grounds
  - Views blocked to lighthouse and art center
  - Location of abandoned canoe bunker
  - Limited parking, shared with other uses
- Evanston Art Center**
  - Possible location to convert to future restaurant space
- Grosse Point Lighthouse**
  - National historic landmark
- Private Property**
- Evanson Water Treatment Plant**
  - Secure facility
  - Lake frontage
  - Potential wildlife refuge within perimeter security fence
  - Opportunity for overlook for birding / habitat area
  - Extend fence and sheet pile south of facility to lake for security
- Clark Street Beach**
  - Large and wide beach
  - Sand volleyball courts
  - Emergency personnel does not have access to lake
- Dog Beach**
  - Separated by significant stone revetment
  - Access point unclear
- Lagoon Historic Building**
  - Winterized building
  - Contains restrooms and concessions
- Boat Launch**
  - Launch for power boats
  - Structural repair needed, problem with siting
  - Unightly and close proximity to formal and historic elements
  - Limited parking available
- Centennial Park**
  - Passive recreation
  - Picnic area
- Lunt Park**
  - Location of historic horse trough
  - Mature tree canopy of mostly oaks
  - Old brick walks overgrown by lawn
  - Unorganized site furnishings

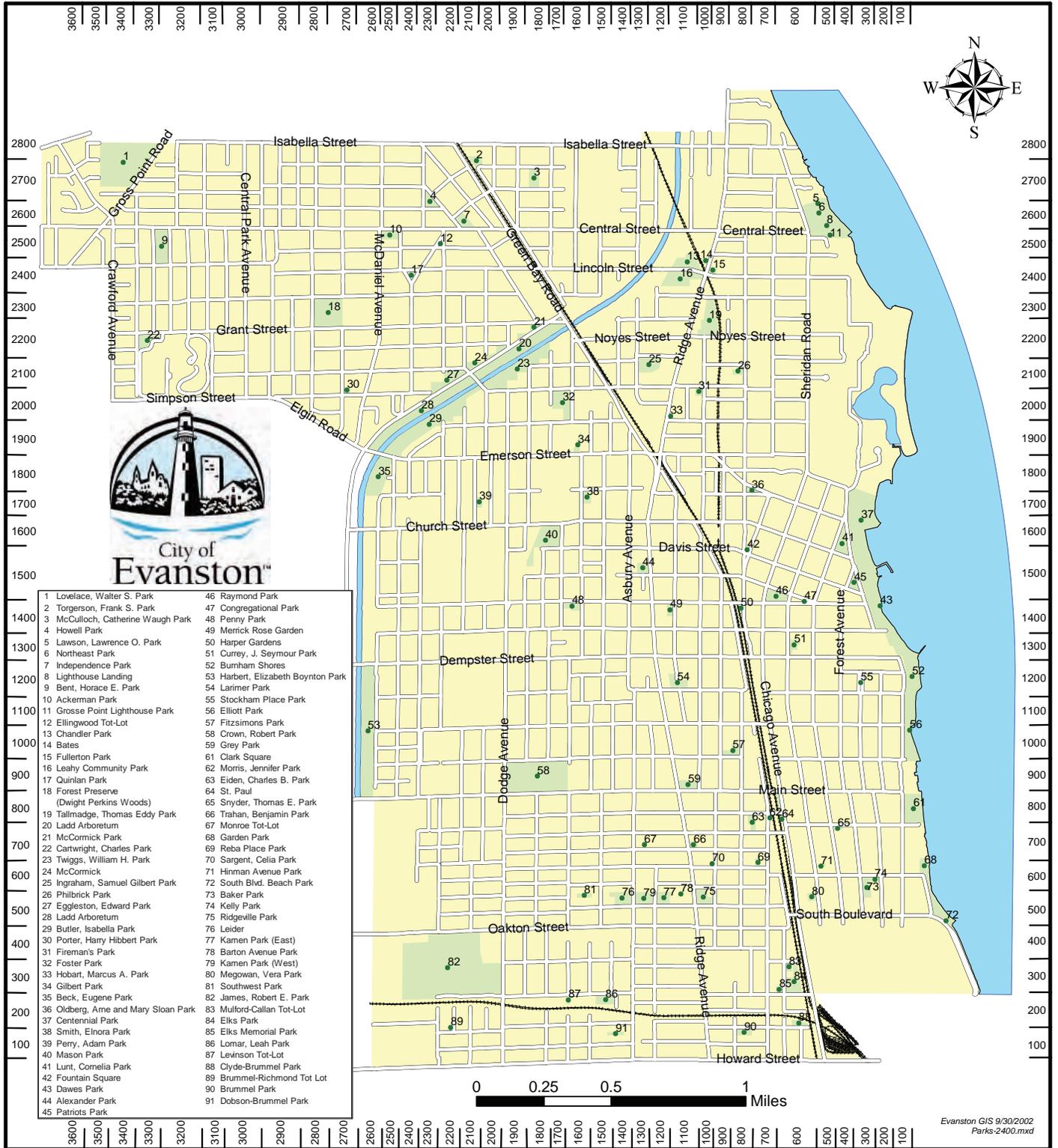
# Site Inventory - South



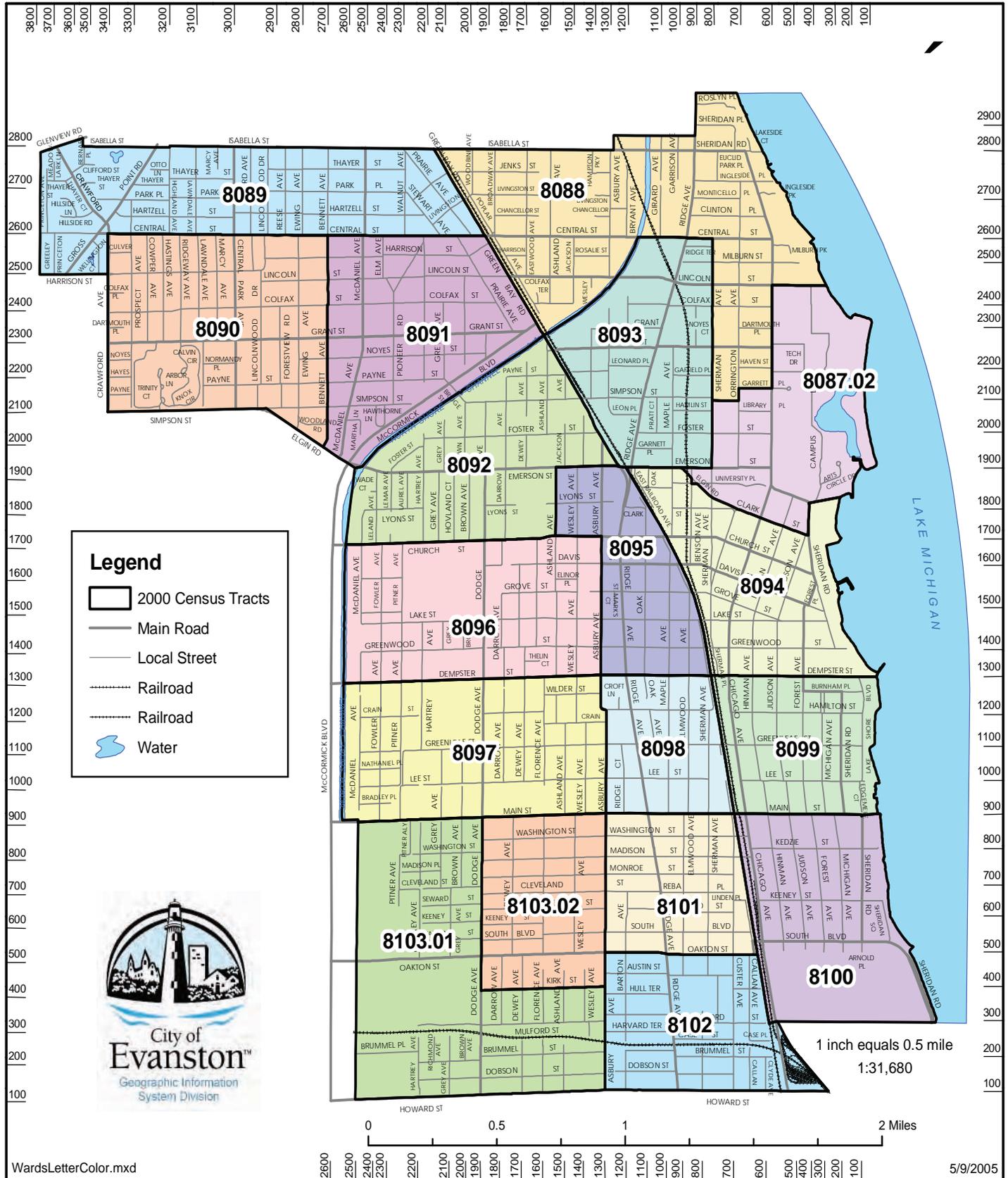
# City of Evanston Zoning



# City of Evanston Parks

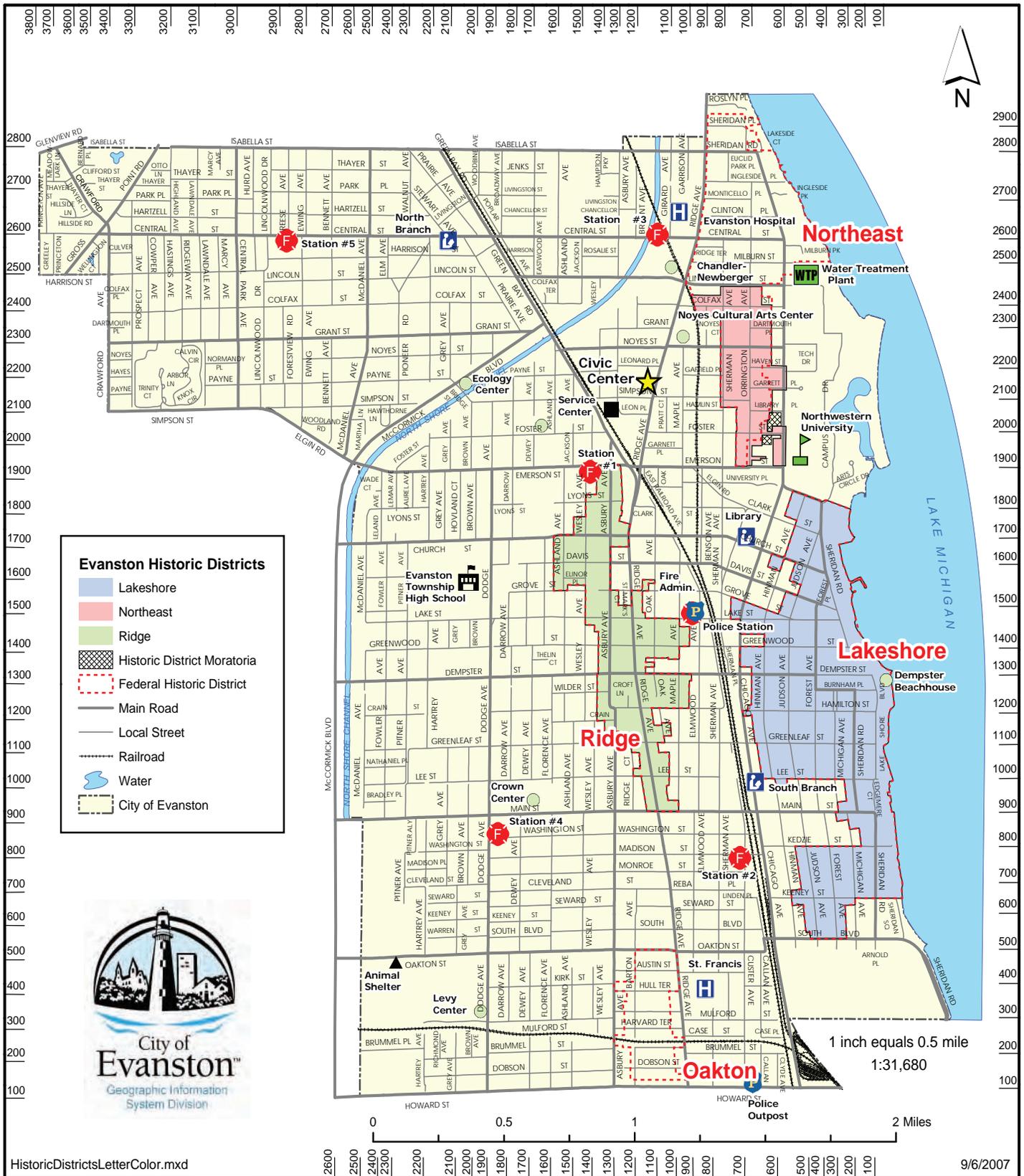


# City of Evanston Year 2000 Census Tracts



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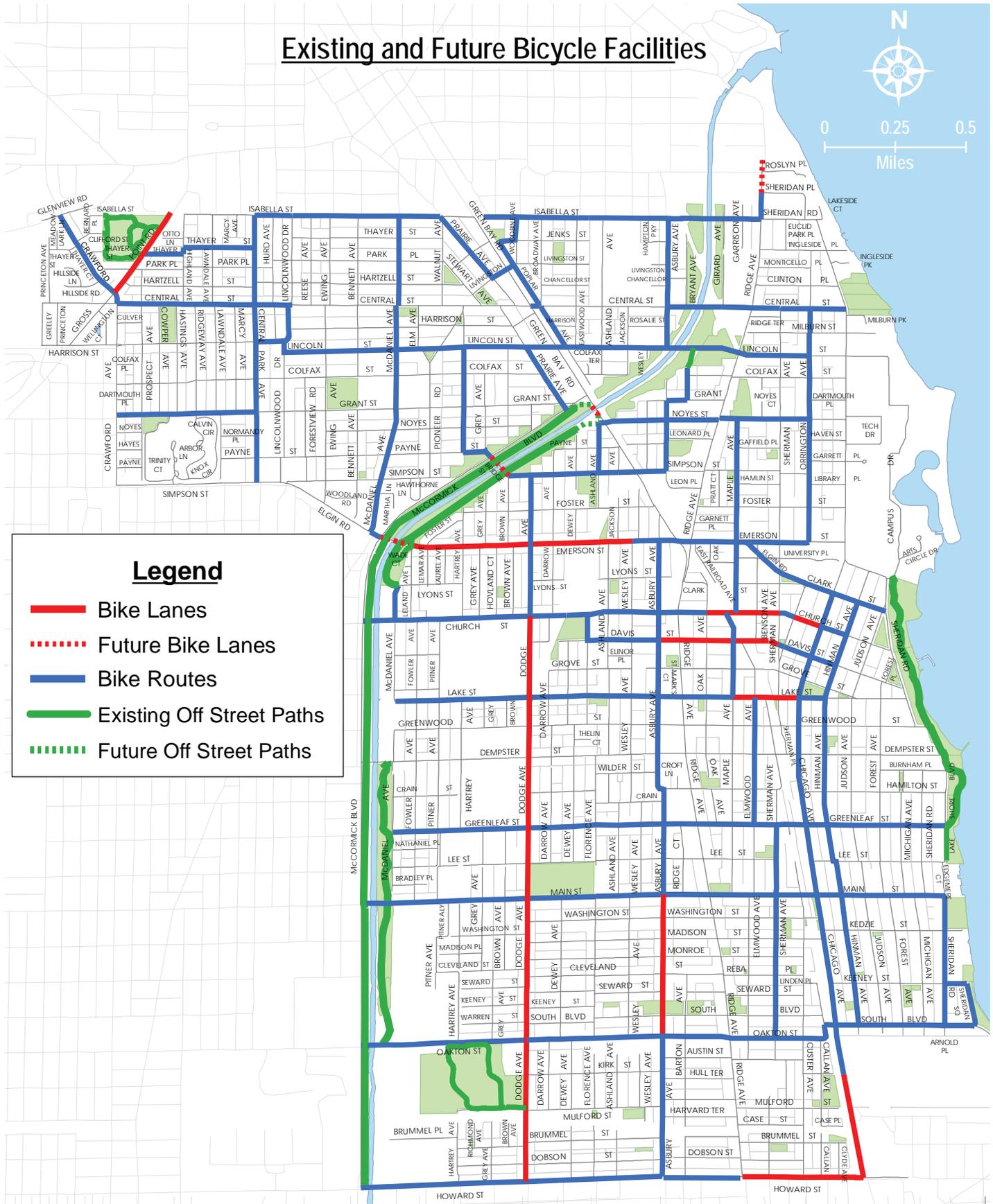
# City of Evanston Local and Federal Historic Districts



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# City of Evanston On-Street Bike Plan

## Existing and Future Bicycle Facilities



**Legend**

- Bike Lanes
- - - - - Future Bike Lanes
- Bike Routes
- Existing Off Street Paths
- - - - - Future Off Street Paths

DRAFT 05/29/2008

Prepared by T.Y. Lin International under the direction of the City of Evanston Division of Transportation

# Illinois Coastal Management Program Coastal Zone Boundary

