An aerial photograph of a city, likely Birmingham, showing a large stadium (the Birmingham Stadium) and surrounding urban infrastructure, including roads and buildings. The image is overlaid with a light blue and green tint.

Birmingham Park Framework Plan

Mission Statement

Burnham Park should provide a variety of recreational, cultural and educational experiences along Lake Michigan. These experiences should be set in an attractive natural landscape environment that serves and is connected to local neighborhoods and that strengthens the open space waterfront of Chicago.

Richard M. Daley
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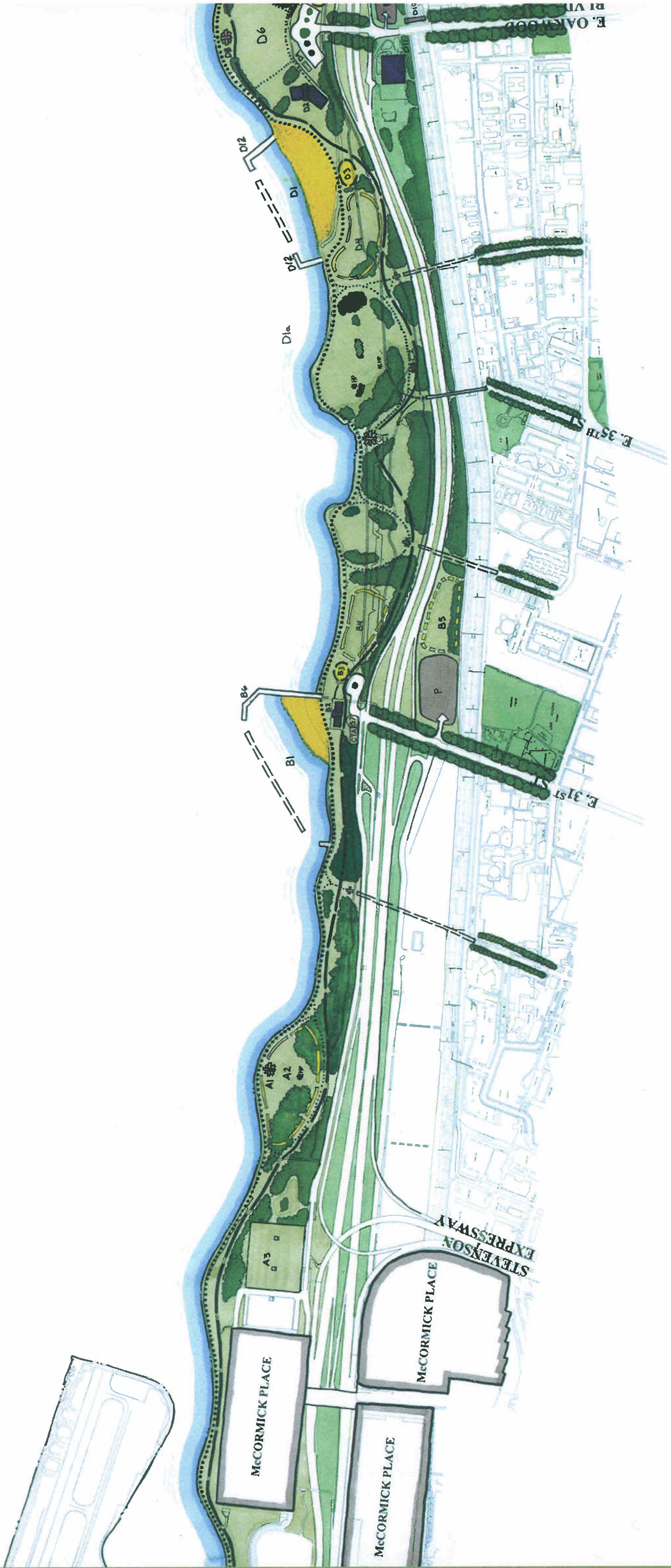
Gerald M. Sullivan

David J. Doig
General Superintendent and CEO

In the spring of 1999, the Chicago Park District commissioned the Burnham Park Framework Plan in order to develop a vision for the future of the park and a series of guidelines for the implementation of that vision. Burnham Park is located along Lake Michigan and spans from the south end of Grant Park at Roosevelt Road to 56th Street including Promontory Point. The area of study for the Framework Guidelines spans from the southern edge of McCormick Place to 56th Street and Promontory Point.

The Framework Plan is a long-range planning tool used to plan for and coordinate with future projects. It establishes a vision for future usage, access, and visual qualities of the park by examining needs and expectations for the park landscape, park amenities and park users, as well as existing conditions of park accessibility and circulation. It contains guidelines for landscape improvements, for the development of additional park amenities, and for an improved physical connection between the park and adjacent neighborhoods.

The Burnham Park Framework Plan was crafted by a team of consultants led by BauerLatoza Studio, working in conjunction with the local community, and the Chicago Park District. The planning process incorporated the ideas of community leaders from both the public and private sectors and community residents. Over a period of six months, the team conducted workshops, interviews, and public meetings with community leaders and citizens to address issues about the park in open public forums. From the workshops and public meetings evolved a mission statement and a series of framework objectives that reflect the values and sentiments of the community.





BURNHAM PARK FRAMEWORK PLAN

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



- LEGEND:**
- PARK FACILITY
 - PARK AMENITY
 - ACTIVITY AREA
 - OVERLOOK
 - NEIGHBORHOOD MARKER
 - DENSE VEGETATION
 - OPEN VEGETATION
 - BIKEWAY / RUNNING PATH
 - PEDESTRIAN PATH

Table of Contents

- I. INTRODUCTION 1
- II. HISTORY OF THE PARK - TIMELINE 2-7
- III. SITE ANALYSIS
 - A. EXISTING PARK AMENITIES..... 8-9
 - B. EXISTING PARK CIRCULATION..... 10-11
 - C. EXISTING PARK CHARACTER 12-13
- IV. PLANNING PROCESS 14-15
- V. FRAMEWORK PLAN GUIDELINES 16-17
 - A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES 16-17
 - B. PARK ORGANIZATION..... 18-19
 - C. PARK USE, PROGRAMS & AMENITIES 20-21
 - C1. PARK LINK 1; PARK ROOM 1 22-23
 - C2. PARK LINK 2; PARK ROOM 2 24-25
 - C3. PARK LINK 3; PARK ROOM 3 26-27
 - C4. PARK LINK 4; PARK ROOM 4 28-29
 - D. PARK CIRCULATION & ACCESS 30-33
 - E. PARK CHARACTER 34-35
 - E1. PARK VIEWS & LANDSCAPE BUFFERS 36-39
 - E2. PARK VEGETATION 40-41
 - E3. SITE FURNISHING GUIDELINES 42-43
- VI. APPENDIX
 - A. PLANT LISTS..... 44
 - B. PROGRAMMING QUESTIONAIRES 45
 - C. DOCUMENTS REFERENCED 46
 - D. DESIGN TEAM AND PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS..... 47



Make No Little Plans, 1893–1909

On October 30, 1893, Chicago's extraordinary World's Fair, the Columbian Exposition, closed after entertaining 12 million visitors over a six-month period. The fair's numerous plaster buildings were destroyed by fire and razed, and its Jackson Park site was transformed back into green space. Although it was temporary, the "White City" inspired ideas about permanent city improvements. In 1894, the fair's Chief of Construction, architect and planner, Daniel H. Burnham began sketching ideas to create beauty and order throughout Chicago. South Park Commission President James E. Ellsworth asked Burnham if he thought it possible to create a link between Jackson Park and Grant Park. Burnham soon began work on the "Outer Park Boulevard."

Known also as the South Shore Development or South Shore Drive, the Outer Park Boulevard was envisioned by Burnham as a magnificent stretch of green space with lagoons and harbors formed by a series of man-made islands. Although Burnham briefly considered this as an exclusive residential development, he soon decided that it should be a public park, a "playground for the people."¹ The park and scenic drive would

buffer the existing Illinois Central railroad tracks. Its boulevard would dovetail with the existing parks, as would the lagoons. Burnham conceived of a linear park with water scenery and boating comparable to "the Thames, the Seine, and the canals of Venice."² In addition to boating, there would be bathing beaches, pavilions and bath houses and Burnham envisioned a series of attractive rustic bridges crossing the lagoons at regular intervals.

At a dinner party in Commissioner Ellsworth's home in 1896, Burnham began presenting his ideas for the lakefront to prominent Chicagoans including Marshall Field, George Pullman, and Philip D. Armour. Burnham made presentations to civic clubs and business organizations not only for his lakefront plan, but also his ideas for improving the function and appearance of the city and surrounding areas. Enamored with Burnham's vision, in 1901 the Chicago Commercial Club invited Burnham to become a member, and decided to take on the city improvement project. Burnham and architect Edward H. Bennett presented their vision in the Plan of Chicago, beautifully illustrated by Jules Guerin, published by the Commercial Club of Chicago in 1909.

Legal Battles for Parkland, 1907–1920

The key to realizing the dream of a new south lakefront park was to acquire riparian rights to the submerged lands from 12th Street to 50th Street. The vast majority of the rights to these lands were held by the Illinois Central (I.C.) Railroad based on their charter of 1852. The first attempt to secure these rights for park development occurred via a 1907 act of the state legislature which, through careful legal language favoring the railroad, was rendered useless. In 1911, however, the South Park Commission's negotiations with the I.C. resulted in an agreement that granted the railroad 160 acres of additional right-of-way in exchange for the site of the Field Museum and the riparian rights to the lakeshore.

Before any work could proceed, many other legal matters needed to be settled. Lawsuits between park interests and other lakefront property owners, and a suit to recover the lands filed by Potawatomic native Americans who had historically occupied the area, had to be decided in various courts.³ In addition, government agencies at nearly every level needed to approve the plans. The Circuit Court of Cook County, which had jurisdiction over the South Park Commission, had to confirm all agreements. The state legislature had to grant the right for the South Park Commission to build on submerged lakefront land. The Chicago Plan Commission, formed in 1912 to oversee implementation of Burnham's Plan of Chicago, wanted a role in the development's design. The City of Chicago refused to co-operate until the railroad agreed to eliminate coal-fired locomotives from its operations in favor of an electrified system. And lastly, the consent of the Secretary of War was necessary due to the Federal Government's jurisdiction over harbors and navigable waters.

The consent of all of the parties was finally secured on April 21, 1920. That February, voters in the area served by the South Park Commission approved a bond issue of \$20 million dollars. Eighty-five percent of the money was earmarked for the formation of new lands to complete Grant Park and create the 'South Shore Development'.

Race Riots Begin on the Beach, 1919

The need for beaches and parkland on the near south side grew significantly over the many years that the proposed South Shore Development remained unimproved. By the 1910's, Chicago had only four municipal beaches. There were also beaches located in Lincoln and Jackson Parks, however, all of these beaches were a distance away from the near south side.

At the time, the city was experiencing significant growth, especially in its African-American community. There had been African-American residents in Chicago since its earliest history, however during this era, known as the "Great Migration," this community grew exponentially. Between 1900 and 1920, Chicago's African-American population expanded from 30,000 to 100,000. At the time the city's "black belt" stretched from approximately 16th Street at the north to 49th Street at the south.

Because there were no nearby municipal or park beaches, many south-siders began using a sandy stretch between 25th and 29th Streets as a bathing beach. In order to get to this beach area, people had to cross the IC tracks near 26th Street. Once one crossed over, there was an invisible dividing line between the north and south sides of the beach. The north end was considered the black beach, the south end considered the white beach.

On July 27, 1919, several African-Americans crossed the invisible line. Soon "began a series of attacks and retreats, counter-attacks, and stone throwing."⁴ During this commotion, a black teenager, Eugene Williams, drowned. According to some, he was hit by stones. Others believed that he was too tired to continue swimming, but too afraid of the violence to swim back to shore. The police came, and when they refused to make any arrests, angry crowds began gathering and rioting soon broke out. A long week of race riots continued through much of Chicago. A total of 38 people were killed, 537 injured, and approximately 1,000 were rendered homeless and destitute by this catastrophic event. The state militia was called in and order was finally restored on August 2, 1919.



South Park Commission's Preliminary Plan of Lake Shore Development, Chicago River to 67th Street, April 1920

The 'Permanent Fair', 1934–35

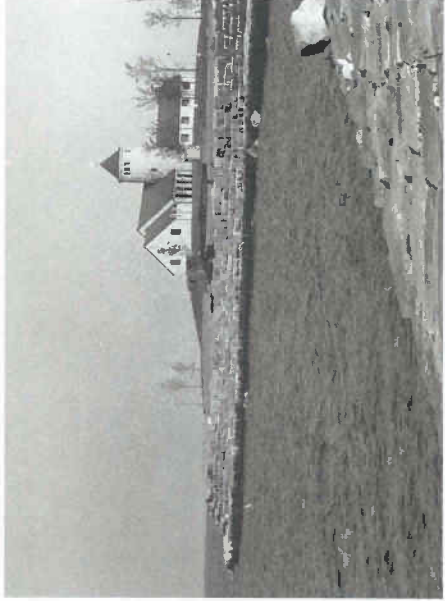
When the Century of Progress closed Mayor Edward J. Kelly created a Recreation Commission to investigate the potential of a 'continuing or permanent fair' on the Burnham Park site incorporating some of world's fair exhibits. The commission, noting the contrast between what Burnham had planned and the commercialization inherent in the permanent fair concept, resolved in part:

That Burnham Park be kept free to the people of Chicago for recreation and repose, that... the parks should not be commercialized in any respect, ... that only such museums should be permitted in the parks as are of a general educational, artistic, and recreational value without any other ulterior commercial motive.⁶

Mayor Kelly and Leonard Hicks, head of the World's Fair Committee responsible for the disposition of the fair's exhibits, disagreed. Using White Plains, New York's Rye Beach "Playland" as a model, Hicks' Committee submitted a report in March 1935 ignoring the concerns of the Recreation Commission. Hicks' report, which received the mayor's approval, called for an amusement park including retention of some



Miniature yacht regatta at the 51st St. Toy Boat Basin, May 23, 1936.



Promontory Point showing step-stone revetment, Burnham Park, c. 1938

Century of Progress attractions and the beach, adding a casino and playgrounds on Northerly Island, and a new convention center on the mainland opposite the island. Focusing on the site's commercial potential and suggesting that this opportunity was as "momentous" as the Burnham Plan had been, the report asserted:

What it may mean permanently to our city fairly staggers the imagination. It will add permanently to Chicago business revenues, swell the volume of our commerce and the total of our employment. It will attract millions of visitors annually and impress them favorably with our city as a place of trade.⁷

In spite of opposition from the public and the press, a bill was immediately introduced in Springfield to create a Metropolitan Fair and Exposition Authority with the power to lease public park lands, charge fees and collect rents from fairs, industrial, trade, scientific, and cultural exhibits, and convention halls, "provided not more than ten per cent of the total park area of such park district shall be used for such purposes."⁸ Any lease of park land for these purposes could extend for up to seventy years.

An incensed public responded with the creation of the first lakefront protection organization, the Committee on Lake Front and Park Defense. Despite their efforts, the bill passed the state legislature in April, 1935, but was amended to reduce the available area to five per cent of the entire park district. Additionally the term of any lease was reduced to twenty-five years, and an airport was proposed on Northerly Island, along with the permanent fair's amusements.⁹

Parks Consolidation and the Exposition Authority, 1934–1941

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chicago's recreation needs were met by an increasing number of independent park districts. By the early 1930s, 22 separate park districts operated in the City of Chicago, each with the authority to levy taxes. By 1933 the Depression rendered most of these districts financially insolvent. To reduce duplicate services and streamline operations, all of the park districts were consolidated by an act of the state legislature in 1934, creating a single Chicago Park District.

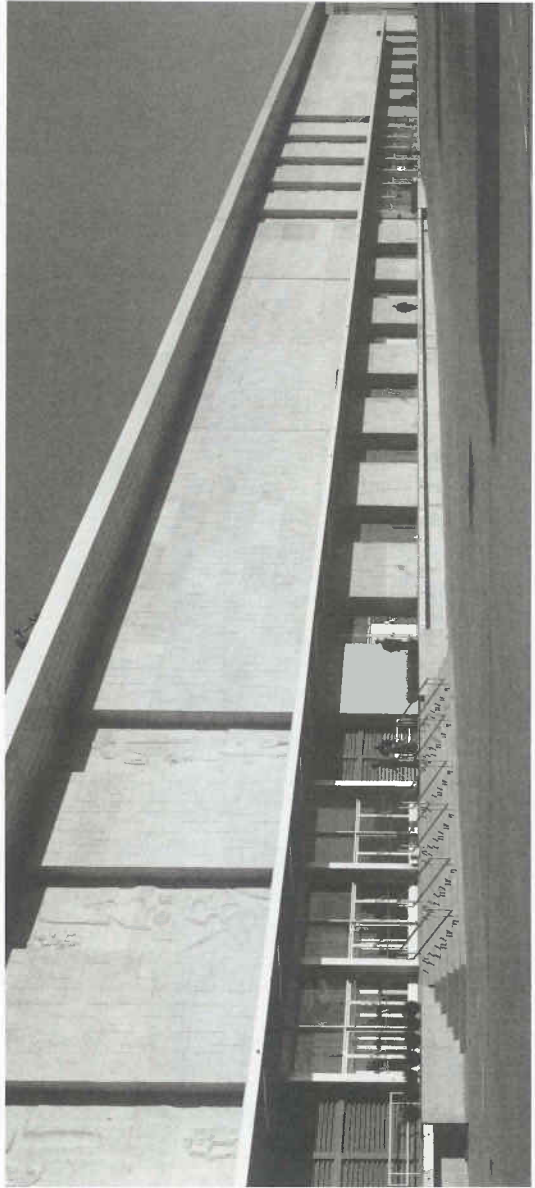
With its administration reorganized and the Century of Progress over, the new Chicago Park District began planning for future developments in Burnham Park. Between 1935 and 1937 the park district in-house designers created plans continuing some of Daniel Burnham's ideas. Federal funding through the Works Progress Administration allowed the park district to begin new landfill operations and to undertake landscape improvements.

Buildings from the fair were removed and landscape was restored between 23rd and 39th streets. By 1941, the park district had built the new 31st Street beach and beachhouse, installed playgrounds, meadows, walkways, basketball and tennis courts, and constructed revetments along Burnham Park's entire shore. The most significant project was the completion of the Promontory Point. Its Pavilion, inspired by a lighthouse, was designed by E. V. Buchsbaum. The landscape was conceived by the noted naturalistic designer Alfred Caldwell.

The most important legacy of this period was the establishment of the Fair & Exposition Authority because it inspired a series of events, including the Carnival of the Lakes, held in Burnham Harbor beginning in 1937. While the continuing Depression and the pending war prevented the Fair & Exposition Authority from taking other immediate actions, the concept of a permanent fair under its direction would replace Burnham's plan as the motivation for south lakefront development through most of the rest of the century.



Chicago Park District employees planting the landscape at Promontory Point, Burnham Park, October 21, 1938.



View of first McCormick Place designed by Shaw, Metz and Assoc., Burnham Park, 1961.

Burnham Park was also used by the Department of Defense during the height of the Cold War for anti-aircraft missile installations. Nike surface to air missiles were on constant alert to defend Chicago from bases located at 26th Street and on Promontory Point. Built in 1954-55, both sites occupied about 6 acres and required buildings, radar, underground missile storage, fuel tanks and launch pads. Ironically, the modern military's 26th Street missile base occupied the former site of the Fort Dearborn replica, built for the Century of Progress, which had burned down in 1940. Changes in military policy and technology led to the removal of the Nike bases in 1962.

In 1953 the state legislature authorized \$5.7 million from parimutual funds allowing the Exposition Authority to construct and operate the convention hall proposed in the 1935 act. Civic groups filed lawsuits to stop the project. The suits were dismissed by 1958 and the first McCormick Place was completed in 1960. When it was destroyed by fire in 1967, there were many people who hoped that it would not be rebuilt in Burnham Park. Despite efforts by civic groups to have the new convention hall relocated outside the park, the Exposition Authority's immediate need, and time savings represented by reusing the old foundation, determined that the new convention hall would remain in the park. Built between 1969 and 1971, this structure, known as McCormick Place East, covers a 19-acre site. The facility's success led to the construction of the McCormick Place North Building in 1986, and the West Building in 1996.

Recent developments, 1989-1999

In 1989 the city and state legislature reorganized the Metropolitan Fair & Exposition Authority as the Pier & Exposition Authority, giving the redefined organization \$150 million to reconstruct Navy Pier as a recreation and cultural center. While the Exposition Authority would still direct activities at McCormick Place, its reorganization would effectively transfer the permanent fair concept from Burnham Park to Navy Pier, where Mayor Kelly's vision for a lakefront amusement facility was finally realized.

While the intrusions on Burnham Park's design after 1935 were extensive, recent developments have shown a trend toward the vision of the park as a green public recreation space. 1989 saw the beginning of new work in Burnham Park with the restoration of Alfred Caldwell's landscape on Promontory Point. Caldwell, 86 years old at the time, returned to supervise and complete the design he had first envisioned in 1937. Additionally, the Chicago Park District rehabilitated the Promontory Pavilion in 1991.

In 1993, the park district undertook an extensive renovation of Soldier Field in anticipation of the World Cup Soccer tournament the following year. To meet the needs of park users, new facilities included a Fish Cleaning and Concession Building on Burnham Harbor at 19th Street in 1989-90. In 1992 a 13-acre playground area west of SLSD and north of 53rd St. was renovated and renamed in memory of the late Mayor Harold Washington. An initiative to replace outdated facilities on the lakefront led to the construction of new beach houses at 12th Street beach on Northerly Island and at 31st Street beach in 1997.

In 1999, an underused part of the park west of Lake Shore Drive at the 47th Street parking lot is being transformed into a Butterfly Garden. Another significant event this year is the start of the shoreline protection project, to reconstruct revetments in Burnham Park from 26th Street to 56th Street. This project, which will not be completed until 2008, may also include the formation of up to 120 new acres of land, representing the first new south lakefront landfill in over 60 years.

A recently completed project with a major impact on Burnham Park's landscape has been the relocation of Lake Shore Drive and creation of the new Museum Campus, an integrated and attractive setting for the lakefront museums. This 57-acre project occupies parts of Grant and Burnham parks. In Burnham Park it included the removal and reconfiguration of the north-bound lanes of the drive, transformation of hardscape into green space, and return of the park east of the stadium to recreational uses.

The 50-year lease granted by the park district for Meigs Field expired on September 30, 1996. Beginning the year before, when the city, park district, and over 60 civic organizations held meetings to discuss the future of the airport site, they agreed that the airport revert to parkland. The proposal favored by Mayor Richard M. Daley focuses on nature, with provisions for lagoons, natural landscapes, campgrounds, and an outdoor museum. Mayor Daley's plan was approved by the City Council. However, there was a heated debate between the city and the state, which wanted the airport to remain open. After months of controversy, in February 1997 Mayor Daley and Governor Jim Edgar announced an agreement granting a five year extension for the airport. The deal specifies that, as of 12:01 a.m. on February 10, 2002, the site will be returned to the park district for redevelopment as parkland.

The design for the new landscape on Northerly Island is one of many opportunities to enhance Burnham Park. One current opportunity is the Illinois Department of Transportation's phase I project for the reconstruction of SLSD. Other proposals follow in this report. This plan provides a framework for future developments that will allow Burnham Park to continue evolving into the vital public recreation space worthy of its original visionary Daniel H. Burnham.

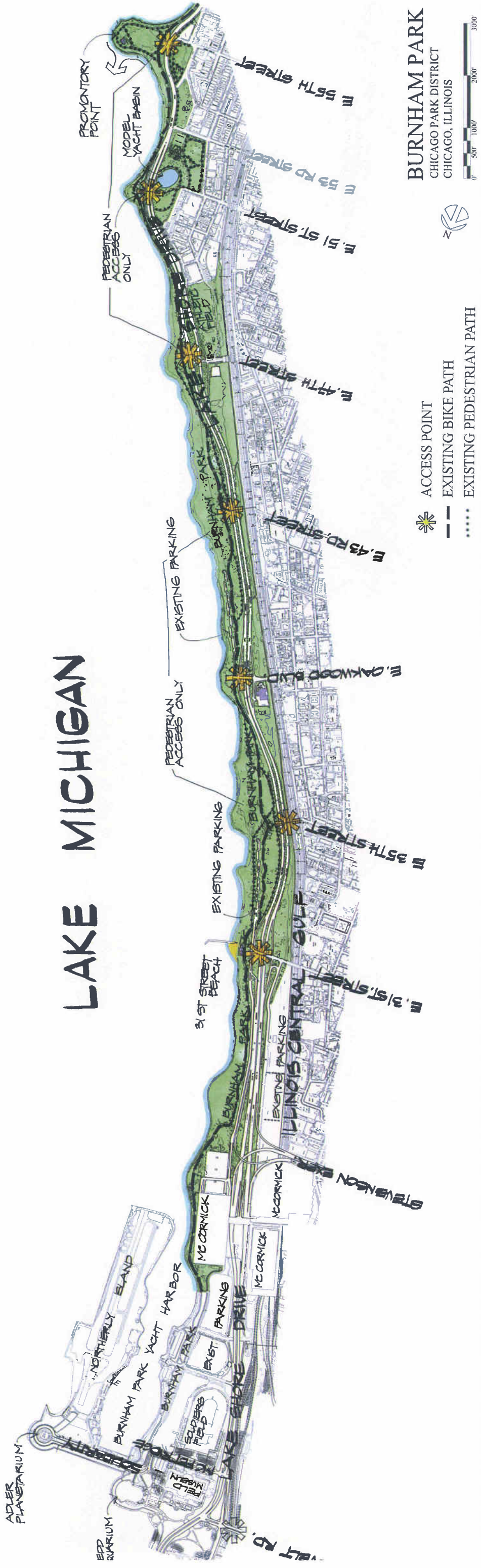
by **Julia Sniderman Bachrach & Timothy N. Wittman**

for the Chicago Park District
December, 1999

- 1 Burnham, Daniel H. and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago, Chicago: Commercial Club of Chicago, 1909; facsimile republication, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970, Plate L.*
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 3 *Chicago Park District, Historical Register of the Twenty-Two Superseded Park Districts*, Daniel F. Breen, editor, 1941, vol. 1, p.311.
- 4 *Chicago Commission on Race Relations, The Negro in Chicago, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922, p. 4.*
- 5 *Lohr, Lenox R. Fair Management, The Story of a Century of Progress, Chicago: Cuneo Press, 1952, p.15.*
- 6 *Halsey, Elizabeth. Development of Public Recreation in Metropolitan Chicago, Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission, 1940, p. 57.*
- 7 *Chicago Daily News, March 6, 1935.*
- 8 *Citizens' Association, Bulletin No. 93, April 24, 1935.*
- 9 *Halsey, p. 62.*
- 10 *Chicago Park District, Annual Report for 1955, pp. 5 & 25.*

All historic photos are courtesy of the Chicago Park District Archives

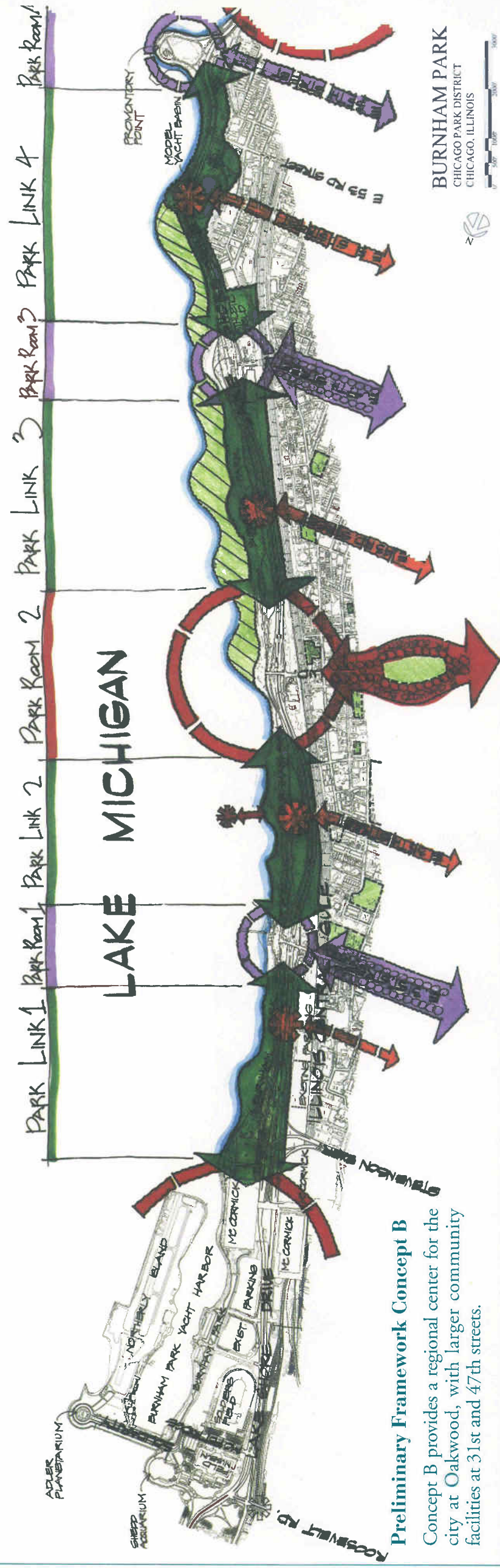
Pedestrian and Bicycle path at 53rd Street





View to Chicago Skyline from 35th Street





Preliminary Framework Concept B

Concept B provides a regional center for the city at Oakwood, with larger community facilities at 31st and 47th streets.



Over a period of six months, the team conducted a series of five public meetings and a two-day public design charrette. A steering committee comprised of members of public agencies and not-for-profit groups with a significant interest in the Lakefront, guided and gave feedback about the development of the plan. Through a combination of surveys, "visioning sessions" and public discussion groups, a series of cohesive ideas about park use and park character evolved.

Public Meetings #1 and #2

At the initial public meetings, the team compiled information about current park usage— including positive and negative perspectives of the park. During public meetings a number of "visioning exercises" were held to develop ideas about future park uses, and to gauge responses to types of potential landscape treatment for the park. Several general concerns and desires emerged during the first meetings.

- Additional amenities such as beaches, beach houses or other recreation areas should be added to the park north of 51st Street. Restrooms and concessions as well as separate walking and bicycling paths should be added throughout the park.
- The park should have quiet, natural areas for sitting and relaxing or strolling. The park should not become overcrowded with activities and people.

• Access to the park should be improved, the park should be well maintained, and security features such as lighting and first-aid or emergency facilities should be added.

• During the two-day design charrette, the team used the information compiled during the previous meetings to create two preliminary framework concepts. These concepts address the role of the park in relation to the adjacent neighborhoods, the South Side community, and the City of Chicago as a whole.



Public Meetings #3-5

Over the course of the following meetings the plan was revised to incorporate public comments. The final framework plan envisions a park with a community and neighborhood focus, and with the potential to accommodate larger events at the Oakwood area. During these public meetings, the following concepts emerged as desires for shaping and enhancing the park.

- The "Heart of the Park" should be centered at Oakwood Boulevard, with "low-key" neighborhood oriented activities in the remainder of the park. It should contain a flexible and expandable outdoor space which can accommodate open-air events, and which also retains the natural character of the park.
- Park landscaping should maintain and enhance the natural character of the lakefront, should be able to sustain wildlife habitats, and should include opportunities for education about the natural environment.

- Park amenities should focus on those activities that can only be accommodated on the lakefront.
- Parkland should be increased through lakefill where possible. Existing land should be used for park purposes; parking should be relocated to the west of Lake Shore Drive.

Survey results, and a list of public participants are located in the Appendix.

Mission Statement

Burnham Park should provide a variety of recreational, cultural and educational experiences along Lake Michigan. These experiences should be set in an attractive natural landscape environment that serves and is connected to local neighborhoods and that strengthens the open space waterfront of Chicago.

Underlying the mission statement is a series of principles that provide a foundation for the framework plan.

Burnham Park is a place where nature and culture can flourish in all their forms.

Burnham Park should provide a multitude of natural and cultural experiences by focusing on facilities that provide educational or interpretive experiences, places for performances or educational events, and naturalized areas with interpretive trails and habitat areas. It should utilize its special location on the lakefront for water-related recreational activities and outdoor spaces while preserving and enhancing views to both Lake Michigan and the Chicago Skyline.

Burnham Park is a secure and comfortable place.

Burnham Park should be reinforced as a safe and accessible destination with improvements to entrances, parking areas, public transportation, pathways, lighting and signage. Pedestrian access to the park should be improved with new barrier-free and accessible entrance points over Lake Shore Drive at quarter mile intervals. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation should be expanded within the park with separate trails for each.

Burnham Park is a place where all feel welcome.

Burnham Park should be a place where nature and culture flourish, where every visitor is welcome and comfortable, and where the local community goes to relax and enjoy the lakefront. This principle improves the landscape quality and diversity of the waterfront while protecting and enhancing views of the lake and the Chicago skyline. It should vary the park experience by creating a series of open sunny areas and enclosed shady spaces organized around a series of “Garden Room” links.



Framework Plan Objectives

The Burnham Park Framework Plan provides a structure that enables the Chicago Park District and the local community to create a new future for Burnham Park. Drawing from the workshop sessions and interviews with the community, the plan provides a series of mutually reinforcing objectives that support the framework recommendations. The recommendations are outlined in detail in the Framework Guidelines, but the principle objectives can be summarized as follows:

- Maintain a balance between areas of activity and areas of repose within the park through the creation of “Park Links” and “Park Rooms”.
- Designate existing parkland for park use by relocating the majority of surface parking to the west of Lake Shore Drive.
- Increase park land with lake infill at 39th Street and at the Morgan Shoal (47th-50th Streets) to provide increased lakefront recreational opportunities for Near and Mid-South Side users, including additional beaches, park facilities and related programs.

• Preserve and enhance the naturalistic landscape character of the park to provide areas to experience nature and habitats to attract birds, fish and other wildlife.

• Reduce the noise of Lake Shore Drive in the park through the use of landforms and landscape buffers at designated areas.

• Improve access and circulation into and through the park by creating additional bicycle/pedestrian access bridges, separate pedestrian and bicycle paths, opportunities for CTA bus stops, and vehicular drop-off points.

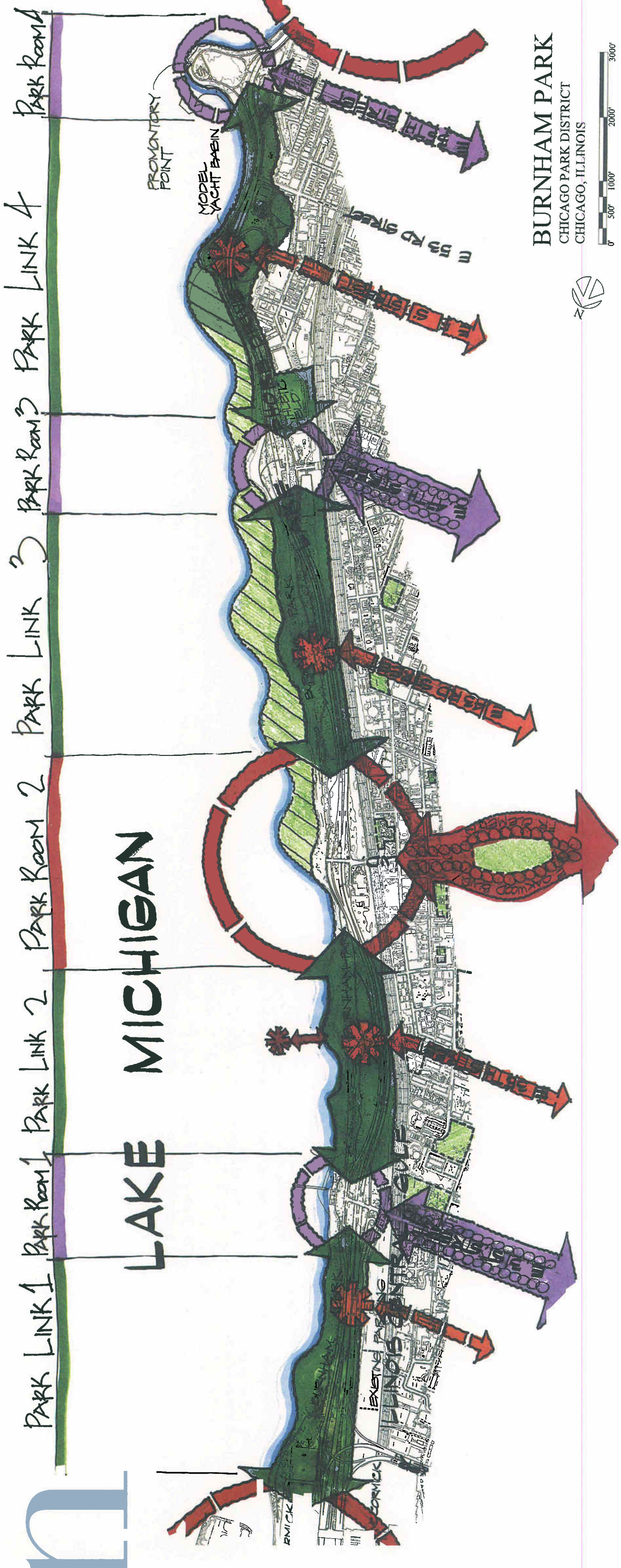
• Strengthen the connection between the park and the adjacent neighborhoods through a series of landscaped “Gateways” and “Greenways” with extensive street plantings and shade trees.

• Preserve view corridors to Lake Michigan and the skyline from the park and Lake Shore Drive at designated areas.

• Create opportunities for beaches and community beach buildings which will support a variety of lakefront programs and activities for community and neighborhood use.

• Create a Burnham Park Advisory Council made up of community members to work in conjunction with the Chicago Park District to guide the implementation and development of future work in accordance with the Framework Guidelines.

• All future lake projects will comply with the Lakefront Protection Ordinance, and will incorporate inter-governmental agency coordination to ensure that projects are developed in conjunction with the Framework Plan Guidelines.



BURNHAM PARK
 CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS





Chicago Park District Summer Program

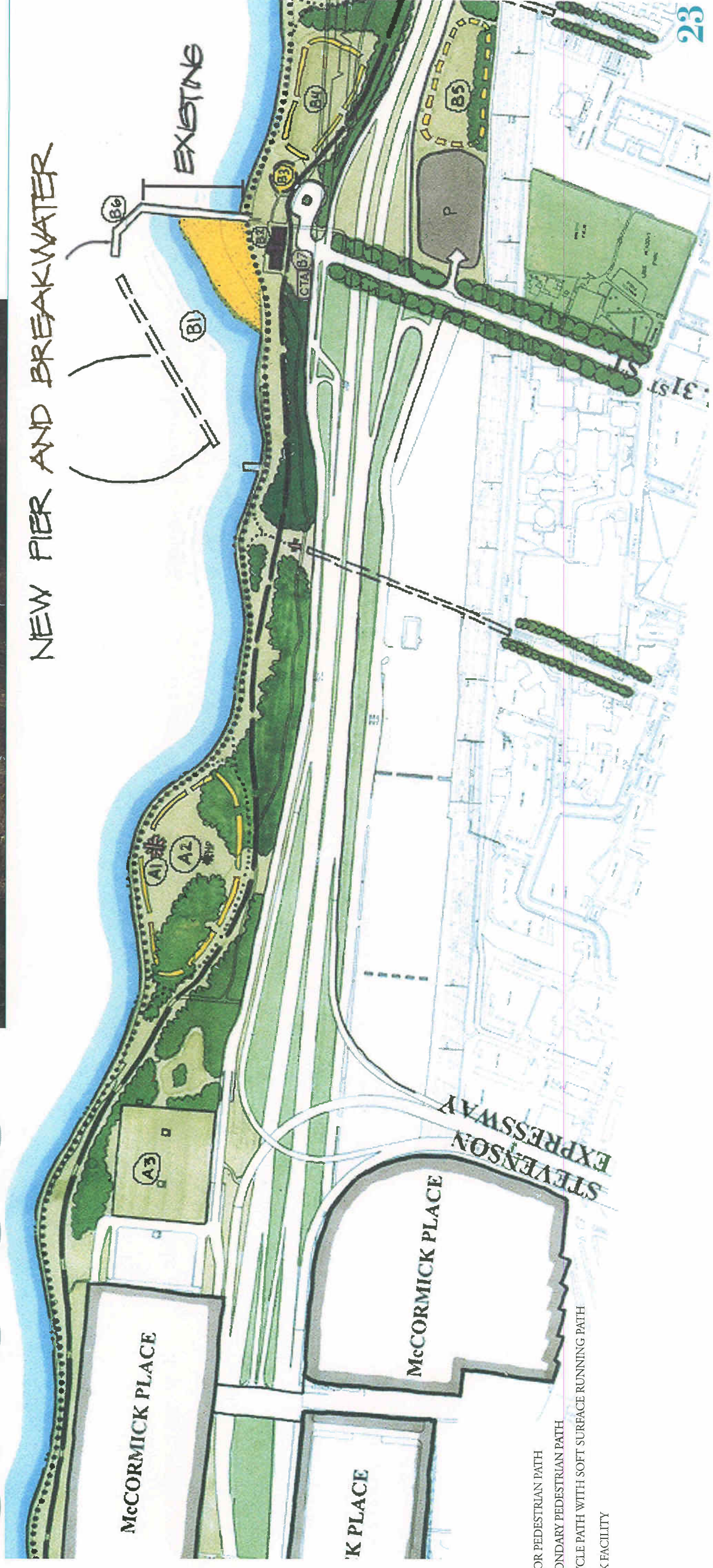


Street



Example of bird habitat (Jackson Park)

NEW PIER AND BREAKWATER



- MAJOR PEDESTRIAN PATH
- SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN PATH
- . - . - . BICYCLE PATH WITH SOFT SURFACE RUNNING PATH
- PARK FACILITY

d Blvd.

Recommendations (continued)

- Provide a drop-off and parking for people with disabilities adjacent to the Beach Building.
- Use landforms and landscape plantings along Lake Shore Drive to reduce traffic noise.
- Remove existing parking from the east side of Lake Shore Drive. Create a landscaped parking area on the west side of the drive with lighting, and clear, accessible pedestrian access.

- MAJOR PEDESTRIAN PATH
- SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN PATH
- BICYCLE PATH WITH SOFT SURFACE RUNNING PATH
- PARK FACILITY

Example of community garden
(Jackson Park)

