

Southport Park Watershed Rejuvenation

Presented By

The City of Kenosha and Southport Park Association
The Fund for Lake Michigan
Parkitecture and Planning





Southport Park Community Partners



Southport Park Watershed Rejuvenation

Here's a more detailed look at the park's history:

Early Vision:

Kenosha's park system, including Southport Park, began to take shape in the early 20th century with the formation of the Kenosha Park Association in 1906. [↗](#)

Industrial Boom and Social Reform:

Kenosha's industrial expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led to a growing middle class interested in social reform and public spaces. [↗](#)

WPA Development:

The Great Depression brought about the need for public works projects, and the WPA funded the development of Southport Park, including the beach house. [↗](#)

Southport Beach House:

The Beach House, a two-story structure with a ballroom, changing rooms, a concession stand, and a lifeguard station, was built between 1936 and 1941. It was constructed using recycled materials from condemned buildings, giving it a unique architectural blend. [↗](#)

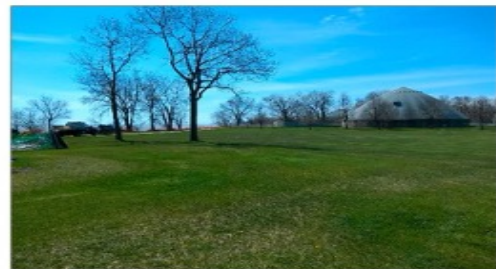
National Register of Historic Places:

The Southport Beach House was recognized for its historical significance and architectural merit by being listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. [↗](#)

Continued Importance:

Today, Southport Park remains a vital part of Kenosha, with the Southport Park Association partnering with the city to maintain and improve the park, focusing on environmental stewardship and community engagement. [↗](#)

Current condition Southport Park



Southport Park Master Plan Conceptual View



- LEGEND**
- 1 ARRIVAL DESIGNATION**
 - Historic/painted lighting along drive
 - Enhanced landscaping
 - Street parallel parking along drive
 - 2 DROP OFF AREA**
 - Simplified sidewalk network
 - Enhanced landscaping with rolled planters and benches
 - Bike parking with opportunity for future rental kiosk
 - 3 PARKING RECONFIGURATION**
 - Reduced parking lot width
 - Addition of a multi-use path on lake side of parking lot
 - Improved circulation
 - 4 LAKEFRONT TERRACE**
 - Outdoor amphitheater
 - Refresh "retail deck"
 - Access to beach area
 - 5 TERRACE AND LOWER LEVEL ACCESS**
 - Second accessible route to lower level and terrace
 - Direct connection to existing path network
 - Access to northern beach area
 - 6 BEACH RESTORATION**
 - Regrade beach to lower rock walls & create even grade change
 - Replace coarse beach material with beach sand
 - Volleyball and other sand beach opportunities
 - 7 FLAT AREA**
 - New play equipment (ages 2-5)
 - Improved seating and gathering
 - 8 REMOVE JETTY**
 - Remove potential safety hazard
 - Allow for more swimming opportunity
 - 9 RELOCATED SHELTER AND PLAY AREA**
 - Central location with access to parking
 - New play equipment
 - Access to beach house and soccer fields
 - 10 DUNE AND VEGETATION RESTORATION**
 - Native landscape restoration
 - Visual connection to Kenosha Dunes
 - Naturalized beachfront
 - 11 MULTI-USE PATH**
 - Multi-use path connection to Kenosha Dunes
 - 10' wide paved path
 - 12 DOG EXERCISE AREA (OPTIONAL)**
 - Fenced off-leash dog exercise area
 - Open lawn and tree cover
 - Waste and trash receptacles

Southport Park Master Plan
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Master Plan
ID | 2470.08



Context for proposed conceptual plan:

The City of Kenosha's Park and Recreation mission is to advance parks, recreation and environmental conservation efforts that enhance the quality of life for all people.

- 2013 City of Kenosha adopted the Southport Park Master Plan
https://www.kenosha.org/images/public-works/parks/Southport_Park_Master_Plan.pdf

In 2017, the Association signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with City of Kenosha**, thereby establishing a public/private partnership in planning and design for Southport Park

<https://live-southport-park-association-2020.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MOU-signed-copy-pdf.pdf>

Southport Beach House Utilization and Design Recommendations

(At the request of Mayor Antaramian in 2018)

https://live-southport-park-association-2020.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SPA-Utilization-Design-doc-6_2020.pdf

Southport Park Conceptual Landscape Plan

(Adopted by the City of Kenosha Parks Commission August 2020)

<https://www.southportparkassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/May-2020-SPA-Conceptual-pdf.pdf>

Watershed Rejuvenation Plan for Southport Park

(Adopted by the City of Kenosha Parks Commission February 27, 2023).

Motion to authorize the Southport Park Association to seek funding sources for implementation of Project Phase 1 improvements passed unanimously.

<https://www.southportparkassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/22-1440-Plan-Set.pdf>



Master Plan
for
Southport Park
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Amended into the
Kenosha Comprehensive Plan
June 3, 2013

SAA Design Group, Inc.
101 East Dodge Road
Madison, WI 53713
www.saa-madison.com



Engberg Anderson
320 East Buffalo Street,
Suite 200
Milwaukee, WI 53202
www.eoadp.com



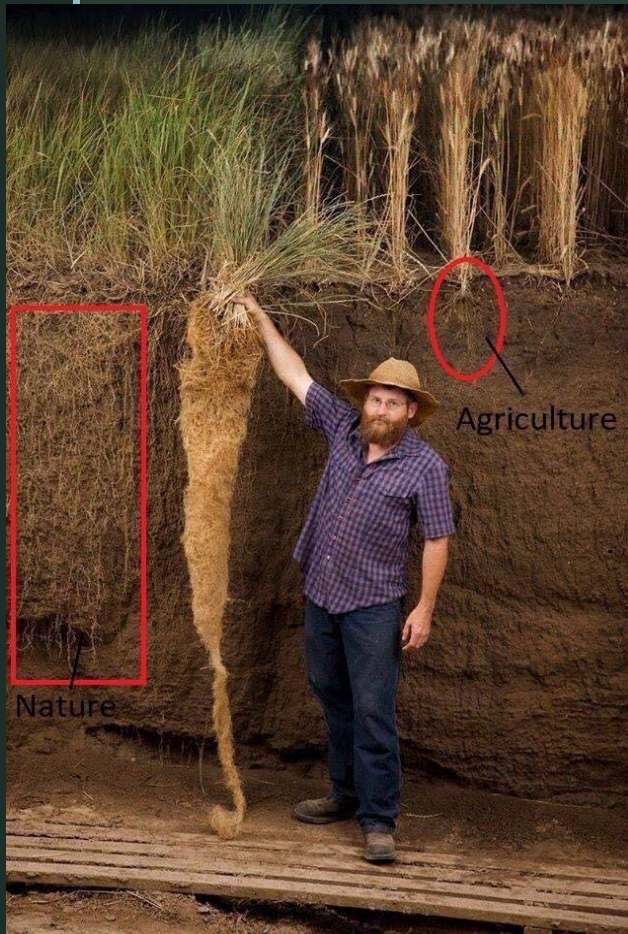
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- ▼ How do naturalistic prairie gardens benefit the Lake Michigan ecosystem and our community?

Parkland composed of durable native plant species

More than 200 million acres of North America — from Canada to Texas — used to ripple like a vast sea of grass. Today, less than 1 percent of that prairie landscape remains. Fortunately, this vital and beneficial habitat is slowly making a comeback.

Native plants have evolved over hundreds of years to adapt to their surroundings. They may require a little help with weed control as the seeds or young plants develop in a new area for the first year or two, but they require minimal care once established.





Prairie grasslands are effective carbon sinks due to their deep root systems, which store significant amounts of carbon in the soil. Restoring native prairie grasslands is a strategy for capturing carbon and reversing environmental damage by **replanting deep-rooted grasses and wildflowers**, increasing carbon storage in soils. [🔗](#)



Here's a more detailed explanation:

Deep Roots:

Prairie grasses develop extensive, deep root systems, unlike forests which store carbon primarily in above-ground biomass. [🔗](#)

Soil Carbon Storage:

These deep roots decompose annually, adding soil carbon every season. This process continues for hundreds of years, making prairie soils rich in organic matter. [🔗](#)

Carbon Sequestration Rates:

Prairie grasslands can sequester a significant amount of carbon, averaging 1 ton of carbon per acre per year, according to some studies. [🔗](#)

Reliable Carbon Sink:

Grasslands are considered more reliable carbon sinks than forests in certain scenarios, especially in a warming climate, as they are more resistant to drought and fire. [🔗](#)

Restoration Benefits:

Restoring native prairie grasslands can accelerate carbon storage rates and improve soil health. [🔗](#)

Other Benefits:

Besides carbon sequestration, prairie grasslands also offer biodiversity benefits, contribute to stormwater mitigation, and require less maintenance than conventional lawns. [🔗](#)

Water conservation and quality

Prairie plants need less water than most thanks to their hardiness and their deep root systems, which also help funnel rainwater into the soil and water tables.

Some native prairie plants can thrive in heavy soils (such as clay) and survive standing water, which can make them good candidates for low areas or rain gardens.

These plants help filter impurities from the water that might get into underground aquifers, lakes and rivers.



Year round beauty

Walking by a prairie garden and brushing past aromatic plants can release sweet fragrances from plants such as white-flowered mountain mint and lavender-flowered bergamot.

Blooms may be gone by late fall, but foliage and grasses can provide colorful swaths of oranges and reds and add depth to the autumn landscape.

Besides providing seeds to feed birds in the fall and winter, prairie foliage can offer shelter to wildlife and texture for a winter landscape — especially with grasses. "The grasses anchor the whole garden and regulate the nutrients," said Beth Markhart, outreach and training director with Minnesota-based Prairie Restorations. "They're going to be the foundation."



Reduced maintenance and mowing

Areas converted to prairie don't require mowing. Every few years the prairie ideally experiences a controlled burn (which replicates lightning strikes and natural burns).

Only part of the prairie should be done at once. That way a diversity of insects in the unburned area can populate the whole garden and help the biome thrive.

An alternative to burning is periodic mowing areas of the prairie area down to about six inches in late winter or early spring before new shoots come up. This de-thatches old foliage and churns up dead stems.



Piet Oudolf & Naturalistic Gardens in Netherlands & Germany, August 2018

Attract pollinators

Prairie plants are natural pesticides.

Butterfly weed, blazing star and purple clovers are among the many native prairie plants that attract and nourish butterflies, bees and a wealth of beneficial insects such as parasitic wasps, which don't sting people and will keep spiders, ticks and insects that harm plants under control.

Pollinator gardens are considered natural classrooms for students of botany, ecology, and environmental stewardship in all age groups.



Feed the birds

Planting a prairie can sustain a diverse world of insects. "Almost every songbird species depend on insects for their young," Diboll said. "If you don't have insects, you don't have birds." Seeds from flowers such as echinacea, coreopsis and Joe Pye Weed will feed goldfinches and other birds.

"We are starting to see a shift aesthetically in embracing natural looks instead of being trimmed and clipped," [Prairies] are a wonderful, sustainable landscape that creates one of the best habitats for wildlife from birds to every kind of pollinator." *

* Alan Branhagen, director of operations at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and author of Native Plants of the Midwest (Timber Press, 2016).



Educational landscape design

Prairie gardens are educational landscapes for students of the biological sciences in all age groups.

They encourage responsible environmental stewardship of our precious land and water resources, as well as providing habitat for the protection and preservation of natural species.

These gardens offer year round beauty and can inspire myriad opportunities for education, play, relaxation, and volunteerism in Southport Park and beyond- to all of Kenosha's park system.



The Southport Park Association proposes landscape improvements to Southport Park to include the following elements:

- ▶ Naturalistic Prairie Garden landscape installation
- ▶ Walking and cycling pathways
- ▶ New activity areas for all age groups
- ▶ Expansion of ADA accessibility throughout the park
- ▶ Venue for watercraft and play equipment rentals
- ▶ Defined location(s) for future parking expansion
- ▶ Upgraded signage
- ▶ Upgraded lighting elements
- ▶ Accessible power sources throughout the park















a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Partners in Kenosha's Lakefront Renaissance

Southport Park Association of Kenosha was founded in 2014 by community volunteers as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We are committed to fostering public-private partnerships supporting historic preservation and sustainable environmental stewardship throughout our community for the enjoyment and education of generations to come.

Since our founding, we have worked with the City of Kenosha. We entered a formal partnership in 2017 to provide support, including fundraising, for comprehensive Southport Park rejuvenation efforts. We continue to work with the city toward ongoing improvements in the historic Southport Park Beach House and the surrounding landscape with an emphasis on sustaining the health of Lake Michigan now and into the future.



The Southport Park Association

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Learn more @: southportparkassociation.org

Your donation brings People, Parks, and Preservation together!