



**City of Sandusky  
Lions Park Shoreline  
Restoration Project  
TECHNICAL REPORT**

**Lake Erie Protection Fund Award  
SG 393-10**

**November 29, 2011**



*Lions Park Shoreline at Sunset*

**City of Sandusky  
Lions Park Shoreline Restoration Project  
Lake Erie Protection Fund Award – SG 393-10**

**Project Abstract**

The City of Sandusky Lions Park Shoreline Restoration Project involved removing concrete debris along approximately 900 linear feet of Sandusky Bay shoreline and grading the shoreline to provide a more gentle transition from the upland park area down to the water's edge. The key objectives for this project were to restore the shoreline; provide a beach-like environment at Lions Park; improve public access to Sandusky Bay for swimming and the launching of non-motorized watercraft; improve the aesthetic appearance of the shoreline; and to help revitalize the neighborhood surrounding Lions Park.

This project resulted from recommendations in the 2008 Sandusky Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This plan called for Lions Park to be rejuvenated and to have it become a "premier waterfront community park focusing on the priority needs of the community and family activities." A master plan specifically for Lions Park was then developed in 2009 following a lengthy public involvement process. The first phase of this plan was to improve the shoreline and public waterfront access.

The Shoreline Restoration Project was completed in November of 2010 by the City's contractor, Mark Haynes Construction. ESA and Associates and The Collaborative, Inc. were responsible for engineering and design work.



***Lions Park Shoreline Pre-Construction***



***Lions Park Shoreline After Construction***

**City of Sandusky**  
**Lions Park Shoreline Restoration Project**  
**Lake Erie Protection Fund Award – SG 393-10**

**Technical Report**

**Introduction**

The City of Sandusky Lions Park Shoreline Restoration Project involved removing concrete debris along approximately 900 linear feet of Sandusky Bay shoreline and grading the shoreline to provide a more gentle transition from the upland park area down to the water's edge. The key objectives for this project were to restore the shoreline; provide a beach-like environment at Lions Park; improve public access to Sandusky Bay for swimming and the launching of non-motorized watercraft; improve the aesthetic appearance of the shoreline; and to help revitalize the neighborhood surrounding Lions Park.

This technical report will include a discussion of the role of Lions Park in the waterfront recreation history of the City of Sandusky; the rationale for the shoreline restoration project based on the recommendations in the City's 2008 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the 2009 Lions Park Master Plan; a description of the shoreline restoration project including activities, timelines and work products/deliverables; a section on hurdles experienced during the project and lessons learned and a section on the monitoring of the shoreline post-construction.



***Aerial View of Lions Park Before Shoreline Restoration Project***

## History of Lions Park

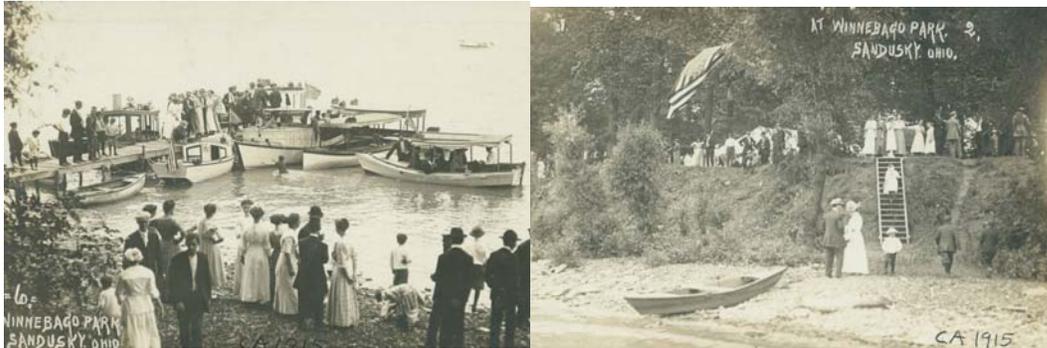


*Views of Lions Park August 2011*

Lions Park has been offering the public access to the Sandusky Bay shoreline for almost 100 years. With its spectacular view of the Bay and canopy of large native trees, the park has been a favorite destination for area residents for many years. The park dates back to 1912 when it was opened to the public as Winnebago Park. The picture below from the local Sandusky newspaper provides an account of the opening of the park:



According to historic records, the beach at Lions Park has been a favorite “bathing beach” and boating destination for local residents. The pictures from 1915 below show residents enjoying the waterfront access provided along the Winnebago Park/Lions Park shoreline:



In 1928, Winnebago Park was deeded to the Sandusky Lions Club by then-owner George Eger and renamed “Lions Park”, making it one of the oldest Lions Parks in the United States. Lions Clubs across the United States and around the world have a rich heritage of providing and maintaining parks and recreation facilities for their respective communities.

Sandusky is also significant in Lions International’s organizational history. In 1925, the Lions Club held its national convention at nearby Cedar Point. It was at this convention that Helen Keller challenged the Lions to become “knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness.” Lions International has since done much work in the area of sight conservation, including free eye screenings, free cataract surgeries for those who cannot afford it, collection and distribution of used eyeglasses, and “Campaign Sight First”, which raises money to cure and prevent blindness. The local Lions Club and the City plan to memorialize this historic challenge with a statue of Helen Keller in Lions Park.



*Lions International’s Logo      Portrait of Helen Keller*

In 1931, Lions Park was given to the City of Sandusky by the Sandusky Lions Club. It has been owned and maintained by the City since that time. The Sandusky Lions Club, however, has renewed its interest in the park since the Lions Park Master Plan was completed by the City in 2009 and has pledged to contribute funds for park amenities. The Club recently planted three (3) new trees in the park to replace many of the ash trees which had to be removed from the park due to the emerald ash borer.



***New Trees Planted by Sandusky Lions Club – November 2011***

### **2008 City of Sandusky Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

The City of Sandusky completed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2008 which identified overall community recreation needs and provided recommendations on future recreational facility improvements. The Facilities Development Plan contained with the Master Plan contains “Big Moves” that represent the major physical improvements that need to be implemented to fulfill the needs of the users of the City park system.

These “Big Moves” will provide the majority of the following key elements that citizens have expressed a desire to see the City provide in facilities and services:

The priority ranking of facility needs include:

- Development of trails for walking and biking
- Indoor facilities for fitness, exercise, and swimming
- ***Outdoor swimming***
- ***Public beach***
- Indoor lap pool
- ***Waterfront access and parks***

The priority ranking for program needs includes:

- Adult fitness and wellness programs
- Community special events
- Water fitness programs

- Nature programs
- Senior adult programs
- **Water-related activities**
- History
- Adult sports programs
- Youth sports programs

The community also identified priorities for investment by indicating how they would allocate an additional \$100 in funds toward a list of items. Priority ranking of these needs includes:

- Improvements/maintenance of existing parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities (\$29)
- Development of new indoor recreation facilities (\$22)
- Development of walking and biking trails (\$16)
- **Improvements to waterfront parks (\$13)**
- Construction of additional sports facilities (\$9)
- Expand the number and type of programs and classes (\$6)
- Other miscellaneous improvements (\$5)

The largest deficit of open space and recreation facilities based on the recommended facility standards include:

- **Community Parks**
- Greenways/Linear/Linkage Parks
- **Signature Parks**
- Trails
- Indoor Recreation Space
- Swimming Pools (Indoor/Outdoor)
- Adult Softball
- Soccer and Multi-Purpose Fields

The recommended **Big Moves** include:

- Reinvigorate the City and enhance the residents' quality of life through investment in the following neighborhood and community based facilities and programs:
  - City-wide Trail System
  - Renewal/Replacement Program for Park Amenities
  - **Lions Park Enhancement – Enhance Lions Park as the residents' premier waterfront community park focusing on the priority needs and family activities.**
  - Core Recreation Program Development Plan

- Annual Community Special Events
- Year-Round Indoor Recreation Space
- Enhance Mills Creek Golf Course
- Enhance and grow tourism opportunities
- Advance the redevelopment of the Marina District along the downtown's waterfront
- Leverage regional presence to enhance service offerings, improve financial sustainability and reduce duplication.

In this regard, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan “set the stage” for the development of a master plan for the improvement of Lions Park which addressed many of the community needs described above.

### **2009 Lions Park Master Plan**

In the summer of 2009, the City of Sandusky selected a consultant through an extensive request for proposals process, The Collaborative, Inc. (TCI), to complete a master plan for the improvement of Lions Park. A master plan steering committee was also selected by the City to guide the planning process which consisted of members from the City Commission; City Planning, Recreation, Economic Development and Horticultural staff; Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District, Erie MetroParks, Sandusky Lions Club, City Bayfront Corridor Committee, Sandusky Planning Commission, Sandusky Recreation Board, City ADA Advisory Board and several neighborhood residents.

The steering committee met four (4) times during the planning process to review concepts and give guidance and direction to TCI. Two (2) meetings open to the general public were also held as well as presentations to the Sandusky City Commission at different stages in the development of the master plan.

The guiding principles used to develop the final master plan based on public and steering committee input were the following:

- Shoreline restoration with improved pedestrian access.
- Passive/family park; ideal for picnics, walking, relaxing, and casual recreation.
- Build upon and protect the lake view.
- Protect the trees.
- Improve vehicular circulation.
- Easily identifiable park gateway.
- Sustainable initiatives/native habitat restoration.
- Pedestrian links/pathways to surrounding neighborhood.
- Balance quality with cost.
- Improve safety.
- Acknowledgement of and respect for Lions Club roots.

- Low maintenance.

The final master plan was presented to the Sandusky City Commission on December 14, 2009 and adopted by the Commission shortly thereafter. A picture of the final master plan is found below:



**Lions Park Master Plan**

The Lions Park Master Plan recommended the following improvements to rejuvenate the park:

- A new park entrance and vehicular circulation system;
- Restoration of the shoreline – (excerpted from the Master Plan document)  
“Restoring the shoreline and providing a beach or beach-like environment at Lions Park is one of the key objectives and the driving motivation for the development of the Master Plan. The current shoreline suffers from severe erosion with a steep drop-off at the water’s edge that is also littered with large slabs of broken concrete. This concrete had originally been placed there in an attempt to prevent further erosion, but current thinking by the Army Corps of Engineers is that it may actually exacerbate erosion issues. It is also an aesthetic degradation of the Lions Park waterfront. The Master Plan recommends removing all of the concrete debris and cutting the slope back to produce a gentle transition from the upper wooded park to the water’s edge. The slope would be planted with a drought tolerant tall fescue turf grass and would be maintained as a lawn beach, perfect for sunbathing, picnicking, etc.;



***View of Concrete Slabs on Lions Park Shoreline (Pre-Construction)***



***Concept Drawing of Restored Shoreline from Master Plan***

- Creation of an event lawn for small special events;
- Construction of a new picnic pavilion with restrooms on the shoreline;
- New playground areas;
- New splashpad area;
- New walking trail around the perimeter of the park and connections to the Sandusky Bay Pathway and Monroe Street;
- Improvement of the existing breakwall for pedestrian access;
- Improvement of safety; and
- Implementation of sustainability initiatives such as rain gardens and prairie restoration.

The Master Plan improvements were divided into phases for implementation. The first phase of improvements recommended in the Master Plan was the restoration of the Lions Park shoreline.

### **Shoreline Restoration Project**

The Lions Park shoreline consisted of a steep clay cliff, covered with broken concrete slabs originally put in place in the 1950's and 60's to prevent erosion. A small natural gravel/coarse sand beach existed at the far west end of the waterfront. Access to the water was treacherous with only a steep, slippery dirt path leading down to the beach. The shoreline was suffering from severe erosion with a steep drop-off at the water's edge that was littered with large slabs of broken concrete (curbs, sidewalks, etc.) and asphalt.

The Lions Park Shoreline Restoration Project called for removing all of the concrete debris and cutting the slope back to provide a gentle transition from the upper park to the water's edge. Portions of the slope were to be planted with a drought tolerant tall fescue turf grass and maintained as a "lawn beach." Future improvements beyond the restoration project will include a ten foot wide ADA accessible walk to the water's edge. The ADA path will be ideal for strollers, walkers, wheelchairs, while also improving water access for canoes, kayaks, surfboards, and other small water craft. With the restoration of the Lions Park waterfront, the site will become an important link on the City's Sandusky Bay Pathway, a continuous waterfront bicycle/pedestrian pathway stretching from the east to west ends of the City.

The Shoreline Restoration Project also made it possible to access Sandusky Bay for swimming as the waters just off Lions Park are some of the safest in Erie County in terms of bacteria levels. According to the Erie County Health Department's Mainland E. coli results, Lions Park did not receive a single advisory. When compared with all of the mainland data from 26 sites in Erie County, Lions Park ties for last with the least number of advisories. The shoreline restoration will also create Sandusky's only public access site for swimming in the City of Sandusky. The only other beach areas in the City are privately controlled along the Cedar Point peninsula.

The project began in October of 2011 and the photographs in Appendix A of this report detail the progression of the grading/restoration project. Construction was done by Mark Haynes Construction of Norwalk, Ohio. The picture of the shoreline below shows the shoreline as it looked this summer with a covering of grass.



***Lions Park Shoreline Post-Construction – September 2011***

### ***Activities, Timelines, Work Products***

The following schedule details the original timeline for the shoreline restoration project. The City, with the assistance of TCI and ESA and Associates of Toledo, Ohio, were able to keep close to this schedule for completion. The project was finished on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010, just nine (9) days beyond the original completion date of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

#### *Project Schedule:*

Begin engineering drawings – May 1, 2010

Submit completed drawings to Ohio Coastal Management – June 1, 2010

Finalize Engineering Drawings – July 1, 2010

Solicit Bids for Construction – August 1, 2010

Start Construction – August 15, 2010

Seed Slope – October 1, 2010

Complete Construction – October 31, 2010

Reseed Slope where necessary – Spring 2011

Open Beach to Public – June 1, 2011

Project Evaluation – November 2010 – November 2011

The beach was open to the public in June of 2011. It was opened for “official” swimming access in July of 2011 after the City posted signs denoting “swim at your own risk” and “no lifeguard on duty.”

The shoreline restoration project was supposed to produce the following deliverables:

1. Improve recreation and tourism opportunities by restoring public access to the Sandusky Bay Shoreline.

This was done by removing the concrete debris which blocked access to the water and regrading the shoreline slope to allow for a more gentle transition from the upland park to the shoreline. The Lions Park Beach is now being advertised as a beach area open to the public in City and visitors and convention bureau literature. Previously, the City had no public beach area.

2. Help educate the public on the many recreation benefits that Sandusky Bay has to offer.

The City will continue to promote Lions Park as a waterfront recreation destination. City staff conducted numerous public presentations to civic groups, boaters, City Commissioners to educate them on the improvements taking place at Lions Park and that public waterfront access would now be available to them.

3. Improve water access for small non-motorized watercraft.

The new grade of the shoreline provides for an easy walk down the slope for residents carrying or pulling non-motorized watercraft.

4. Help stabilize an aged, low to moderate income residential neighborhood.

Improving Lions Park will add to the value of the homes in the neighborhood surrounding the park. The neighborhood should also become safer as safety improvements are made to the park and more family traffic visits the park. Currently, there are some crime issues which have detracted from the image of the park and neighborhood residents perceive it as unsafe based on comments received during the master plan process.

5. Restore one of the oldest public beaches in the City of Sandusky and one of the oldest Lions Parks in the United States.

People were using the beach at Lions Park from the early 1900's to approximately the 1970's. The beach was closed at that time to swimming. The shoreline restoration project allowed the City to re-open Lions Park as a public beach and swimming area. The entire Lions Park improvement project will restore one of the oldest Lions Parks in the country. The City is well on its way to complete Phase II of the Lions Park improvements which includes new playground areas, a splashpad, a new restroom building, new basketball courts and some areas with natural vegetative plantings.

### **Hurdles experienced during the project/lessons learned**

The biggest hurdle experienced during the project was dealing with the public's perception of what constitutes a "beach." Throughout the planning and construction process for the shoreline restoration project, staff and the City's consultants were careful to describe the beach as a lawn beach with a mix of pebbles, sand and gravel right along the shoreline - basically whatever natural materials were deposited by the Bay. However, the public and the press took the word "beach" to mean an all-sand beach like what is found at Cedar Point and there were complaints from the public that Lions Park was not a "real beach" and that the City should dump sand along the

shoreline. Staff had to spend some time to explain to the public and the press that the Lions Park beach was a natural beach and that dumping sand on the shoreline was not necessarily a solution. The public also did not realize that permits were required from federal and state agencies to work along the water's edge.

The City also experienced some vandalism in Lions Park after the shoreline restoration project was completed. Once the public realized that someone could easily get down to the water from the park, certain persons decided that they could now "off-road" in their vehicles from the park down to the water. For several weeks, there were tire tracks all throughout the park and along the shoreline and some repair to the grass on the shoreline and in the park was necessary. This activity has now subsided and City staff have not observed any tire tracks in the last few months.

The City is also monitoring the Lions Park shoreline for significant erosion and it will continue to periodically consult with the ODNR Coastal Management Office and Erie Soil and Water Conservation District on shoreline erosion issues. So far, after a year of a "natural" shoreline, the west end of the park appears to have remained fairly stable. However, the east end of the park, which had less "beach" prior to the restoration project and which appears to experience more wave action during inclement weather events, has experienced more changes. Below are photographs taken throughout 2011 showing the Lions Park shoreline at various water levels.



***Lions Park Beach Looking East from West End – November 26, 2010***



***Lions Park Beach Looking East From West End of Park – July 5, 2011***



***Lions Park Beach – East End Looking East – August 30, 2011***



***Lions Park Beach Looking West from East End During Storm – Wind NE 20 Knots  
Gusting to 29 Knots – November 29, 2011***

This project was funded in part by the Lake Erie Protection Fund. The LEPF is supported by the voluntary contributions of Ohioans who purchase the *Erie...Our Great Lake* license plate featuring the Marblehead Lighthouse.



[www.lakeerie.ohio.gov](http://www.lakeerie.ohio.gov)