Lakeside Park Masterplan

Assessing the need for physical changes began with the Lakeside Park Exploratory Committee (LPEC) creating a descriptive appraisal of the existing park and making specific recommendations for future use and growth of amenities, activities and facilities. The Lakeside Park Masterplan is a strategic plan to implement their recommendations.

Planning meetings to review the specific items and details of the Masterplan that should be considered started in February of 2016. The committee consisted of representatives from the City of Fond du Lac, LPEC and Architects and Engineers from Excel Engineering. Items identified as possible improvements where:

- Rehabilitating or replacing the existing pavilion.
- Installing additional public boat slips.
- Developing an amphitheater.
- Creating a public beach.
- Installing a boardwalk along Lake Winnebago.
- Constructing a bridge to connect Lakeside Park with Lakeside Park West.
- Develop a nature walk within Supples Marsh.
- Installing a splash pad.
- Constructing an ice rink.
- Replacing or Rehabilitating of existing shelters.

Early concepts of the Masterplan were to create a new pavilion that would be constructed on the end of North Main Street as you enter the park. The new pavilion was proposed to be the hub of activity, being three to four times the size of the existing pavilion. The new pavilion, now called the Hub, was to be the catalyst to the park, bringing new life and interest. A breakwater was proposed to facilitate fishing and boat docking that would be connected to the new beach and boardwalk.

New parking areas were proposed to provide ample off-street parking for the new Hub and also support a future amphitheater.
The Masterplan continued to be developed and the details refined. The new Hub is to have a rental area, a public area for art and exhibits, a food service or possible restaurant and year-round toilets. Concerns were raised if the DNR would allow any type of structure in the lake. Other concerns of the original concept were the location of the boardwalk for protection of spring ice shoves and the beach location. A time to investigate the conditions of the existing shelters was established and meetings where scheduled to meet with DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers on what could be constructed in the Lake. Details of a bridge that would connect Lakeside Park and Lakeside Park West also needed to be developed.

After meetings with the DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers, it was decided not to build a breakwater but construct a pier that could be put in and taken out of the Lake for protection of ice shoves and to not interrupt the natural currents of the lake. The beach was no longer planned on the Hub site and it was decided to consider a former site north of Oven Island.

The conceptual master plan, along with details of the planned improvement, was presented at a public information meeting, four service originations and the Advisory Park Board. The Advisory Park Board raised concern of the proposed location of the Hub. The Board stated that the new location would block the view of the lake as you enter the park and would remove important trees in that area. The Board recommended that the hub be moved to the existing pavilion site. Doing this would require that the existing pavilion would need to be taken down.
The Fond du Lac City Council Committee of the Whole met on November 30, 2016 to review the Masterplan and to provide direction with consensus from the Council. The Council endorsed the Advisory Park Board recommendation to locate the new Hub on the existing pavilion site.

The plan has focused on an upgrade of the existing pavilion. The replacement of the existing pavilion is to create a more inviting, modern and attractive spot for weddings, family gatherings, public art and general civic space. The concept of a new Hub, which would contain meeting space for up to 200 people, kitchen areas, year-round toilet rooms, patio space, a location for food trucks, a central exhibit area with a balcony to maximize the view of the lake, and an expanded area for a concessionaire, has been placed over the existing pavilion footprint. The central exhibit area would provide for some public seating, local exhibits, art, historic and nature exhibits. The meeting space would be flexible in dividing it into smaller multiple groups from 50 to 100 people and up to 200 people. The Hub would open onto large patio areas that would provide for public and rental seating and would take advantage of the lake views. The plan also calls for an outdoor public art display area.

The plan is to use organic materials that are obtainable locally on the Hub that would complement and promote harmony to the site and its natural surroundings. Wood and natural stone will be the basic building elements. The north and south sides of the Hub are to be very transparent to allow for views to the lake and to show the activity going on in the Hub.
Due north of Fishermen’s Pier, a temporary pier intended to provide fishing opportunities and transient boat slips is planned. The pier will be designed to resist wave action and would be removed in the winter months to avoid ice shoves. Additional off street parking is planned to be located on the east side of the channel.

After reviewing the number and style of the park’s shelters, it was determined that the primary need is structural enforcement of the shelters columns, which the city completed in 2017.
Work on the Hub is to start work after Labor Day 2020 and to be completed before Walleye Weekend 2021.

Future plans call for a bridge that will connect Lakeside Park and Lakeside Park West. The bridge is planned to span the Fond du Lac River providing a 15 foot clearance above the high water mark for a 10 foot wide channel. The tallest part of the bridge is to be planned over the east side to take advantage of the main river channel. The bridge would have a gradient that would be accessible to people with physical disabilities as well as for bike traffic.
Boardwalk and viewing platforms are planned to be installed in Supple Marsh. The marsh walk is a creative and attractive way to provide environmentally friendly access to the natural areas of Lakeside Park West. The marsh walk will cater to individuals, families and groups that care about and wish to learn more about the eco-system within the western area of Lakeside Park.

A future amphitheater is planned for Lakeside Park West. It is planned to be a shell type structure with lawn and bench type seating. The amphitheater is to be simple in design and construction as not to compete with the Wifler Center in Buttermilk Creek Park. The amphitheater will provide space for festivals, concerts, bands, plays, historical presentations and other ceremonies. The final location and seating capacity of the amphitheater has not yet been finalized. Planning and construction will not be pursued until significant partnerships demonstrate that there is a need for-and community resources to support such a facility. The west bank of the Fond du Lac River offers an opportunity for docked boats to enjoy the amphitheater activities.

The extension of utilities will be a significant requirement of the facility.
Construction of a splash pad and skating rink to provide for families’ enjoyment of outdoor water-based activities in both summer and winter seasons is being planned. The splash pad is planned to be by the playground equipment to take advantage of the existing playground and toilet facilities. The ice rink has a number of possible locations. One possible location is an area off Main Street as you enter the park. The other possible location is on Baseball Island which would allow the city to take advantage of partnerships with the Sturgeon Spectacular and Blue Line Ice Arena.

Finally, a second, smaller enclosed pavilion is being planned near the children’s playground area west of Main Street. The small shelter would provide for a more casual gathering and provide for family gathering that would take advantage of the children’s area. The final size, features and location of this shelter has not been determined.

This is a conceptual plan that future decisions of timing, features or location of improvements could change.