

02.

IN THIS CHAPTER:

- + COMMUNITY IMPACT, OUTREACH, AND ENGAGEMENT
- + ENGAGEMENT ROUND 1: UNDERSTANDING
- + ENGAGEMENT ROUND 2: IDEA GENERATION
- + ENGAGEMENT ROUND 3: EXPLORATION
- + ENGAGEMENT ROUND 4: REFINEMENT
- + PARTNERSHIPS & COALITION BUILDING

Community-Driven Process

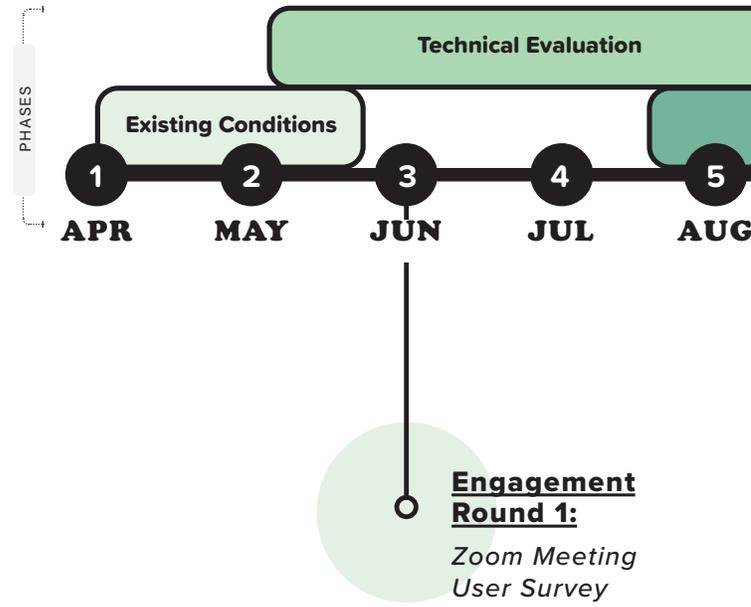
The team has been engaging with the community since spring of 2020 to create a plan that improves access, connects communities to the lakefront, and preserves the long-term health of Lake Erie. This study is especially important for our communities and ecosystem as we consider how climate change will impact our area and the lake in the coming decades.

Community Impact, Outreach & Engagement

During the year-long planning process, the project team engaged over 1,500 community members and stakeholders. The planning process kicked off at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, which required adjusting plans, tools, and strategies to reach communities adjacent to the lakefront and beyond. Community engagement and coalition building were critical components of the planning process and essential to the creation of a community-driven resiliency plan. The lakefront is one of the most significant natural and cultural assets for adjacent neighborhoods as well as the city at large. The process was structured to ensure that current users and communities were involved in every step of the decision-making to shape the future of the lakefront.

Working with community partners and local Community Development Corporations (CDCs), the team created flexible and approachable community engagement strategies to reach the most vulnerable residents. This toolkit of strategies evolved throughout the process as the team learned more about the community and found new ways to overcome challenges.

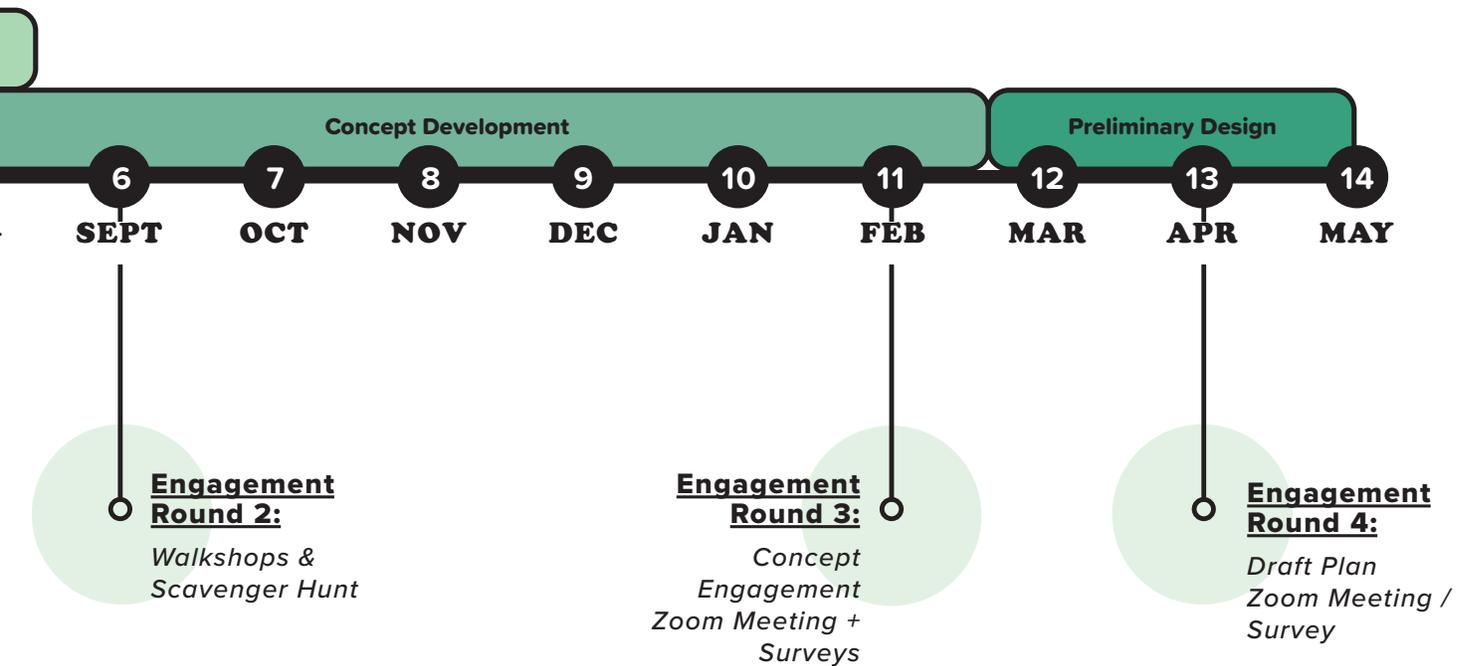
Through this process, the project team learned from community members and residents that the eastern lakefront is valued as a serene natural oasis in the heart of the City that provides scenic views of Lake Erie and downtown. Community members emphasized the importance of retaining the peaceful character of the lakefront spaces, preserving space for current users, and providing more opportunities for gathering and being immersed in nature. But they want safer and better access, more places to touch and connect with the water, more open and flexible space for events and gatherings, more things to do (like picnicking and watersports), more trail connections, and more opportunities to disconnect and enjoy an immersive natural experience. By aligning these community priorities with the need to improve the environmental resilience of the lakefront, the planning



process was oriented toward finding the right balance of community spaces to meet user needs and ensuring the protection of the shoreline and critical infrastructure and the creation and restoration of the natural habitat.

Engagement Tools & COVID-19

The CHEERS project launch and the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic coincided in the spring of 2020. While the worldwide health crisis continued, the nation was faced with two additional crises – social and racial injustice and political upheaval during and after the 2020 election. As communities, businesses, and organizations grappled with a new reality and worked to address community needs, the project team began to workshop creative, flexible, and approachable engagement and outreach techniques to reach residents. This toolkit evolved throughout the process as the team learned more about the community and found new ways to overcome challenges by working with community partners and local CDCs. The final mix of engagement techniques included a range of ways for community members to get involved including digital tools like surveys, videos, virtual meetings, and social media, traditional flyers and postcards, and in-person and socially-distanced events that ensured the safety of all participants.



Outreach Methods

Understanding the potential impact of the project for communities adjacent to the lakefront, the team worked with local organizations, partners, and CDCs to distribute information about the CHEERS study using a variety of outreach methods. Coordination with CDCs and other organizations in the community helped shape the outreach materials and methods to reach the widest number of community members. These methods included traditional media outreach using flyers and postcards, tabling at community events, lawn signs, and conducting intercept surveys as well as digital outreach through websites, online articles, event postings, and social media. A phone number, email address, and project website were incorporated in all materials to ensure that an open line of communication was available regardless of access to technology and the internet.

Digital Engagement

Every round of engagement included multiple ways to get involved and provide input during crucial moments in the planning process. Providing safe and convenient ways to provide input was central to the engagement strategy for CHEERS. Digital engagement activities including virtual scavenger hunts, interactive map exploration tools, surveys, and explainer videos allowed community members to provide input in a meaningful way that required less of an investment in time compared to a traditional town hall or presentation.

Community Meetings

In addition to in-person and digital engagement, three larger, community-wide virtual town halls were held at critical points during the process – visioning, concept assessment, and the reveal of the draft master plan. Each event was held via Zoom and featured polling and breakout discussion groups using an interactive digital whiteboard to record feedback and reference maps and materials. Outreach for the events included targeted email outreach, flyers, posters, social media posts, and direct coordination with local CDCs.

Engagement Round 1

Understanding

The first round of engagement focused on activities that would help the team better understand how community members use lakefront spaces today and how they hope to use these spaces in the future. Activities included an online user survey and virtual town hall meeting.

USER SURVEY

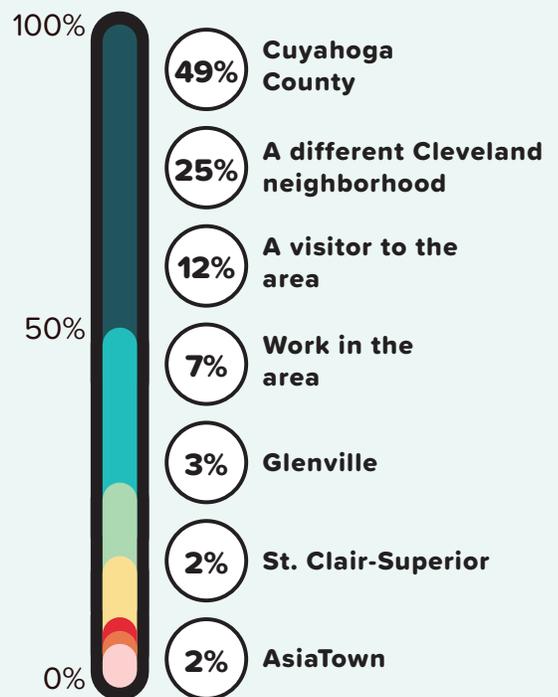
A lakefront user survey was launched at the beginning of the process to gather information about how people use the park today, what they value, and ideas for how they would like to use the lakefront in the future. This feedback helped us better understand how community members use the space today and what they want to see in the future. The survey was distributed online and in print in three languages (English, Spanish, and Mandarin) over the course of more than a month. Over 500 users responded to the survey. Walking and jogging, biking, parking to enjoy the view, picnicking, and bird watching are currently the most popular activities along the lakefront. Users enjoy being close to the water, taking in the views of water and the city, using the open spaces, walking or biking along the trails, and bird watching. Users were concerned about the difficulty to getting to park spaces from adjacent neighborhoods, the impact of I-90 traffic and noise, limited space and activities available in park spaces, the safety of bicycle and pedestrian crossings and routes, and the perceived lack of security in spaces along the lakefront. In the future, they would like lakefront spaces to include more user amenities like restrooms and food and beverage options, more natural spaces, places to touch Lake Erie, better neighborhood and park space connections, areas that buffer park spaces from the highway, and more events, educational programs, and recreation opportunities.

545
COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
CONTRIBUTED!

“What do you like about the parks along the lakefront?”

- #1** Being Close to the Water
- #2** The Views
- #3** Open Space
- #4** Trails
- #5** Bird Watching

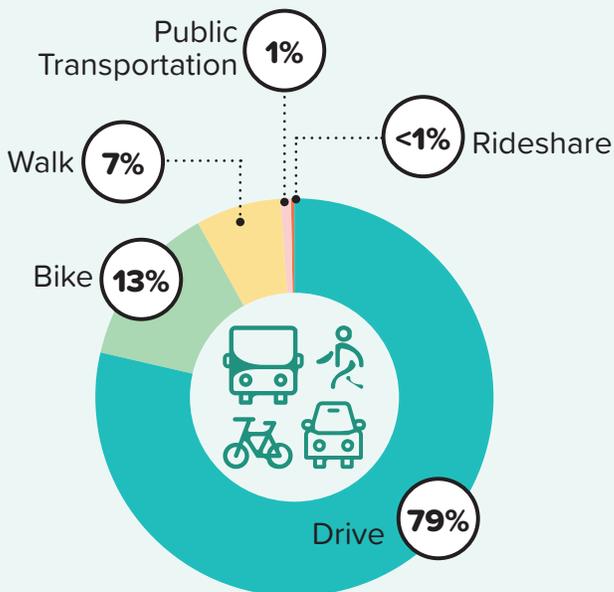
“How are you connected to the area?”



“What are your top concerns with the lakefront?”

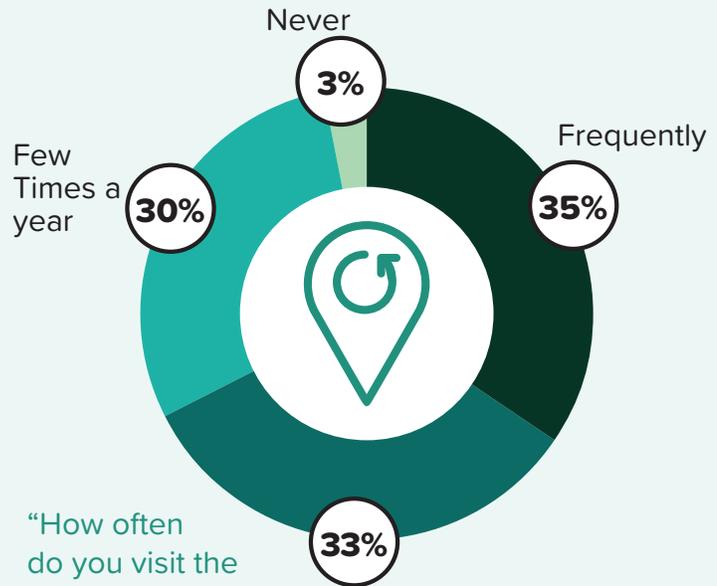
- 50%** “Hard to get to the park areas from neighborhoods (limited crossings of railroad and I-90)”
- 41%** “Impacts of I-90 traffic and noise on park and Lakefront”
- 41%** “Limited space and activities and programs in the existing parks”
- 39%** “Existing bicycle and pedestrian crossings and routes are not safe”
- 38%** “Perceived lack of security in spaces along the Lakefront”

“How do you get to the lakefront?”



“What would you like to see improved along the lakefront?”

- #1** More natural spaces
- #2** Places to touch Lake Erie
- #3** Better connections to neighborhoods and between existing park spaces
- #4** Buffer park spaces from highway
- #5** More events, educational programs, and recreation



“How often do you visit the lakefront?”

Top Reasons for Not Visiting Regularly

- 31%** “No Reason/ Not Enough to do Here”
- 19%** “Limited Access/ Hard to Get Here”

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL #1 – COMMUNITY KICK-OFF

June 30th, 2020 at 6pm

Over 100 community members and stakeholders joined the partners in kicking off the CHEERS study during a virtual town hall in the summer of 2020. The meeting provided an opportunity for residents to learn about the goals of the study, the potential issues and opportunities in the study area, and how they could stay involved throughout the process. Following the formal presentation, facilitators led participants through an interactive breakout group discussion and workshop. This exercise asked participants to provide feedback on how they use the lakefront now, potential hurdles and challenges, and opportunities for the future. A total of ten breakout groups provided feedback and ideas for the future (see Appendix for detailed meeting summary).

➔ Breakout groups used ConceptBoard (a virtual whiteboard / collaboration tool) to draw, add notes, and discuss ideas for the future.



OPPORTUNITIES & ISSUES

Access & Equity

- + get people down to the lake
- + provide opportunities to be "on the water" for all
- + wayfinding & signage
- + extend transit

Natural Areas

- + more greenspace
- + fishing, hiking & birding
- + places to be in nature
- + more natural shoreline areas
- + too much concrete & car infrastructure
- + views of the water

Activities

- + water recreation
- + educational programming
- + places to gather

**130+
COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
CONTRIBUTED!**

VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE...

- "enhanced educational programming"
- "high-quality fishing destination"
- "multi-generational access!"
- "focus on improvements for people who live in the neighborhoods"
- "better places for people to walk"



“Fishing is popular, we need to protect and ensure a high-quality experience while adding new activities”

– Community Town Hall Participant

Key Takeaways:

More Amenities, Activities, and Programming

there is a desire for more visitor amenities (benches, restrooms, places to eat/drink, etc.), areas for watersports (e.g., kayak launch areas), flexible passive and active recreation spaces, places to walk into and touch the water, safe places for kids to play, improved fishing amenities and spaces, and enhanced educational and natural programming.

Maintain and Enhance Natural Areas

participants wanted to preserve the scenic quality of the lakefront and enhance natural features, restore areas of the hardened shoreline and historic streams (e.g., Doan Brook and Giddings Brook), improve habitat areas to support existing anglers, protect bird and wildlife habitats, reduce the amount of impervious / paved surfaces, establish more ecotypes (e.g., wetlands, natural beaches, etc.), and connect to existing green spaces and greenways.

Better Access and Connections

access to the lakefront from adjacent communities (north-south) and between lakefront park spaces (east-west) is a major concern. Participants suggested enhanced biking trails, improved pedestrian and bicycle connections along streets, enhanced crossings over I-90, expanded bus and transit routes, and new trail types to link existing park spaces.

Explore the Potential of the Waterfront

there is an appreciation of the transformative potential of the lakefront and its ability to serve local communities and act as an economic driver and destination within the city.

Buffer the Negative Impacts of I-90

while part of the city's critical mobility infrastructure, I-90 presents multiple impediments to accessing and enjoying the lakefront including safety, traffic noise, and visual obstruction.

ENGAGEMENT ROUND 2

Idea Generation

In the second round of engagement, the team used the existing conditions information and local insight gathered during the first phase of the project to begin exploring ideas with the community. The team held a series of in-person walkshops and launched a virtual scavenger hunt that asked community members to explore what is working and what is not working in the current spaces along the lake.

EMBRACE THE LAKE WALKSHOPS

September 20th & 21st (4 tour routes, 3 time slots)

To find out how people use the park spaces along the lakefront and understand what they want to see in future spaces, the team needed to reach current users of these spaces. This was even more important given the challenges of engagement during a worldwide pandemic. To address this issue and ensure safety of the team and community members, we designed a series of “Embrace the Lake” walkshops where we invited users to meet us at the lakefront for socially-distanced walking workshops that explored different areas of the lakefront and asked users to envision new program elements and spaces they would like to see improved in the future. Conversations focused on identifying elements that are working or are valued by the community as well as spaces in need of future investment. These ideas helped the team hone in on key areas where investment should be focused.

The first set of walkshops were held during a weekend in September 2020. Participants were able to choose from four different tour routes with three time slots per route for a total of 12 sessions. The team and project partners promoted the walkshops via social media posts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, targeted outreach to CDCs (Famicos, MidTown, and UCI), postcard distribution, posters and lawn signs at key areas along the lakefront, and a “This is Cleveland” event calendar post. The walkshops were attended by 87 community members and 12 volunteers who all followed strict COVID-19 protocols for safety.

Tour routes included the area adjacent to E. 55th Street, E 72nd Street, North Gordon Park, and the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve. These walkshops were invaluable to the planning process as they offered the planning team an



opportunity to speak directly with users and “ground-truth” ideas and key areas for improvement. Participants at the walkshops received a free CHEERS reusable water bottle and information about how to stay engaged.

Key Takeaways:

Safer & Seamless Community Connections

participants stressed the need for safer and more seamless connections from the adjacent neighborhoods to the lakefront.

Opportunities to Touch the Water

while community members appreciate the expansive views of water along the lakefront there is a desire to have naturalized areas of the shoreline with opportunities for wading and watersports (fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding).

More Trail Types & Wayfinding

community members enjoy the multilane lakefront bikeway, but would appreciate a variety of pathways and trails, including boardwalks and nature trails as well as better wayfinding and directional signage

Areas to Appreciate Nature

more opportunities and areas to appreciate the natural beauty of the lakefront.

 *Walkshop participants at E. 55th Street, E. 72nd Street, and the CLNP (Cleveland Metroparks)*



“Walkways out into the water with areas for fishing and taking in views of the lake.”

– *Walkshop Participant (E. 55th Street)*

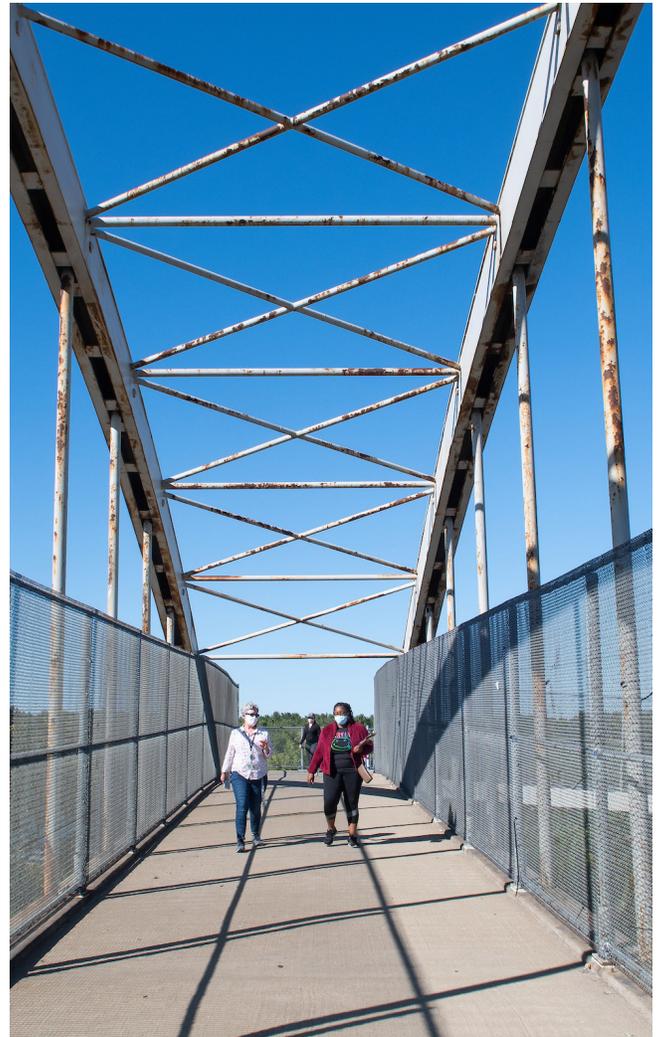
CHEERS!

A softer shoreline and more habitat would be fabulous.

– *Virtual Scavenger Hunt participant*

VIRTUAL SCAVENGER HUNT

The virtual scavenger hunt provided a way for community members who were unable to attend in-person workshops to go out and explore the lakefront independently. A total of eight sites were available to explore. Each site included a different task or question to complete. Questions and activities included providing feedback about amenities, taking a selfie crossing a pedestrian bridge, or snapping a photo of something along the lakefront participants considered beautiful. Participants were invited to visit as many sites as they would like. One-of-a-kind furniture designed and created by Cleveland-area teens through the Making Our Own Space, or MOOS, program were located at some of the eight sites. MOOS engages and empowers youth to transform public space; these pieces were conceived, designed, and built by students in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood of Cleveland and the Moreland and Lomond neighborhoods of Shaker Heights. MOOS is an initiative of the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, a program of Kent State University’s College of Architecture + Environmental Design. Participants to completed the activity or question for at least one site were entered into a raffle drawing to win a Dave’s Grocery gift card.



➤ *Workshop participants traverse the Gordon Park pedestrian bridge of I-90 noting the lack of wayfinding signage and visual appeal.*



A workshop participant takes a moment to enjoy the lake breeze on a MOOS bench near the E. 55th fishing area.

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

100+
COMMUNITY MEMBERS CONTRIBUTED!



- Activities**
- + a place to be close to water
 - + activities for all ages
 - + more fishing & picnicking
 - + places for events
 - + watersports



- Amenities**
- + lighting
 - + walkways & bike amenities
 - + fishing amenities
 - + public art & wayfinding
 - + seating & benches



- Natural Areas**
- + improve water quality
 - + planting & sound buffers
 - + places to view
 - + quiet places



- Access & Equity**
- + connect neighborhoods
 - + improve safety
 - + make it easier to get there by foot / bike
 - + new transportation options



- Maintenance & Safety**
- + security measures (panic/call buttons)
 - + improve safety by the water
 - + fix walkways & sidewalks
 - + clean up and control pests



Cleveland, Ohio

Bird Nerds in Action!

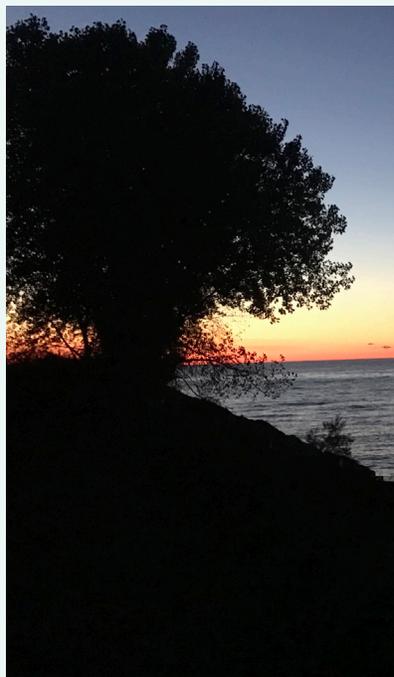
The East Clark “Bird Nerds” are a group of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders that meet after school to learn all about birds. The East Clark School students learn how to identify birds, their songs, and where and how they live. The group has taken numerous trips to local birding areas throughout the region. Their commitment to birding and becoming stewards for the environment is inspiring to all! The group joined the planning team in September for an Embrace the Lake Walkshop at the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve. Their input on amenities for birders and strategies to make birding more accessible and welcoming for youth and communities of color was invaluable.

(left: Bird Nerds by WRT)

+ SPOTLIGHT!

CHEERS Virtual Scavenger Hunt

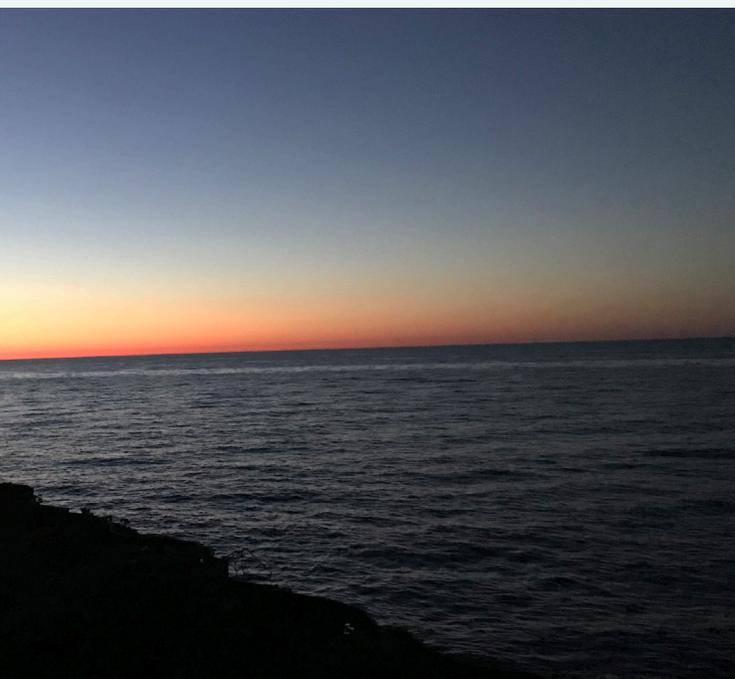
Through this process community members were encouraged to go out and explore the lakefront. Here's some of what they saw and observed during the Virtual Scavenger Hunt!



 A selection of photos submitted by Virtual Scavenger Hunt participants. Participants took photos of areas or aspects of the lakefront they considered beautiful or unique. Photos featured the lake, views of the skyline, sunsets, and natural areas.

“Build a loop trail that incorporates this park and the Cleveland Cultural Gardens”

– *Virtual Scavenger Hunt Participant*



ENGAGEMENT ROUND 3

Exploration

The third round of engagement incorporated all of the innovative ideas generated through the first two rounds of engagement into conceptual themes that dialed up the experiences of touching the water, playing at the shore, and connecting with nature. Each theme included a set of unique goals and projects. Community members were asked to vote on the goals they value and the project they felt would be most impactful to the future of the lakefront. This series of engagement included a virtual town hall, an interactive map explorer tool, and an interactive survey with explainer videos.

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL #2

February 2nd, 2021 at 7pm

At the beginning of February, over 65 community members and stakeholders joined the partners and project team for a second virtual town hall to explore potential projects, goals, and concepts for the lakefront. The virtual town hall was one of three ways community members could provide feedback on the concepts. The team incorporated interactive polling during the formal presentation to ask participants about their preferred goals and projects. Following the presentation, the participants were placed in breakout groups where a facilitator guided them through questions about the concepts and projects using a virtual whiteboard. At the end of the breakout group sessions, each facilitator asked their group to pick a “gold star project,” the one project they would fund over all others. The larger group then convened back in the main room and a representative from each breakout group provided a summary of the topics discussed and feedback received.

1 Community members had the opportunity to join the team at a virtual town hall in February of 2021 to review potential goals and projects.

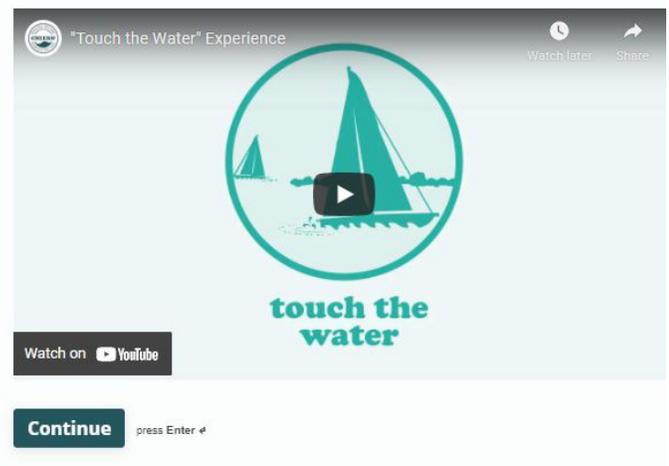
2 An online survey with explainer videos gave community members another way to provide input on goals and projects.



300+ COMMUNITY MEMBERS CONTRIBUTED!

1 → The "Touch the Water" Experience

This experience maximizes water-based recreation and opportunities to view and interact with the Lake.





“For the lakefront parks to be equitable, they must be safely connected to the adjacent communities. You shouldn’t need a car to get there.”

– Survey Participant

DIGITAL CONCEPT ENGAGEMENT

January - March 2021

Community members who could not attend the meeting had the option of taking a video survey or exploring an interactive map. The video survey included short explainer videos that walked through each concept and its series of goals and projects and asked users to answer a few short questions. The interactive map explorer allowed participants to take their time and explore the concepts on a map that included detailed descriptions of the projects and goals. As participants clicked through the map, a pop-up survey window asked questions about what projects and goals they would prioritize.

◀ After watching each of the explainer videos participants were asked to select their favorite projects and goals.

a. Choose the projects that you think will be the most important for the future of the lakefront:

You can choose up to 2

 <p>1</p> <p>THE SHORE</p> <p>A The Shore: Wading Areas / Places to Touch the Water</p>	 <p>2</p> <p>THE BOARDWALK</p> <p>B The Boardwalk: Raised Boardwalk Trails</p>
 <p>3</p> <p>BLUEWAYS</p> <p>C Blueways: Neighborhood Green Infrastructure Network</p>	 <p>4</p> <p>THE LAUNCH</p> <p>D The Launch: Watersports Launch & Activity Center</p>
 <p>5</p> <p>THE COVE</p> <p>E The Cove: Water Habitat Restoration</p>	 <p>6</p> <p>THE HILLS</p> <p>F The Hills: Overlook with Expansive Views of the Lake</p>

OK ✓

How the Concept was Developed

To achieve the goals of the project, the team worked with the community to undertake an urban ecological methodology that works to bring the needs of Lake Erie, the community, and the natural environment into balance. The success of the process is measured by the resilience of the lakefront and the resulting network of benefits that improve the environmental, social, and economic health of the area. During this process, the team worked with the community to weigh competing interests and goals of various stakeholders and partners, determine the programming needs of the community, understand what residents value, and find solutions that provide multiple benefits.

The first step in the process involved maximizing or dialing up the experiences using programmatic elements that different community members requested in engagement sessions. All the maximized experiences or concepts included a unique mix of projects that provided multiple benefits to the economy, the community, and nature. Instead of asking community members to vote on one concept or experience, the team asked community members to prioritize the projects and goals they felt were most crucial or important to the future of the lakefront. What emerged from these activities was not a menu of options or a list of desires, which would create clear winners and losers. Rather by asking users and stakeholders to prioritize needs, goals, and projects, the planning team was able to identify preferences of prioritizing the natural environment, connecting with water, and flexible passive recreation spaces.

Following the third round of engagement, the team worked with project partners, stakeholders, and the design team to create a hybrid concept that combined the highly-rated projects and goals into a final concept that includes multi-benefit projects that improve the health and wellness of the environment, people, and Lake Erie. This final concept creates a resilient lakefront that responds to the needs of the community and stakeholders. All of

the goals and desires of the community, stakeholders, and partners factored into the creation of concepts for potential projects and ideas of how to reshape the future of the shoreline.

The final concept incorporates the top-rated goals and projects from the community. It creates more opportunities to touch and engage with the water through softened shorelines and areas that allow visitors to get further into the water, it uses dredge material to create more park space and habitat areas to buffer critical infrastructure, it provides a diversity of water-based recreation opportunities, it enhances and creates new wetland areas and coves that protect the shoreline and grow habitat along the lakefront, and it creates new greenway connections via E. 55th and 72nd streets that connect communities to the lakefront. Top-rated projects including the cove, boardwalk trails, a cultural trail, greenways, lawn spaces, a shore for wading, an island, and natural surface trails are all project types that are incorporated in the final concept.

MAXIMIZE THE EXPERIENCE



touch the water



play at the shore



connect with nature

PRIORITIZE PROJECTS & GOALS



THE SHORE



THE COVE



THE LAWN



GREENWAYS



THE BOARDWALK



CULTURAL TRAIL



THE ISLAND



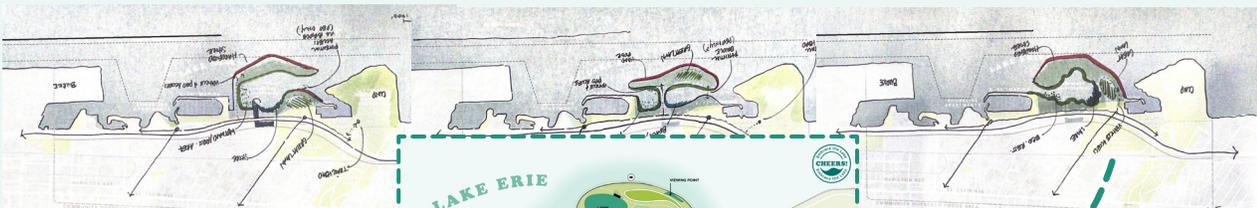
THE HABITAT TRAIL

- + Create more opportunities to touch and engage with the water.
- + Use dredge material to create more park space and habitat areas to buffer critical infrastructure
- + Provide a diversity of water-based recreation opportunities (fishing, wading, watersports, etc.)
- + Enhance and create new wetland areas and protected coves that protect infrastructure & provide new habitat space
- + Create new greenway connections from the lakefront to the adjacent communities

TOP PROJECTS

TOP GOALS

CREATE A HYBRID CONCEPT!



- + Developed sketches that incorporated top projects (voted by the community) and methods to reduce the impact of waves and maximize the storage of dredge material.



ENGAGEMENT ROUND 4**Refinement**

The final round of engagement provided community members an opportunity to refine elements of the draft plan and provide input on early action projects. Community members had the opportunity of joining a virtual town hall, joining in-person walkshops, or filling out an online survey. While this was the last round of engagement included in this phase of the project, this is not the last opportunity for community members to engage in the planning and design of the CHEERS projects. The project partners will continue working with local organizations and CDCs to engage with the community after this portion of the work is complete.

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL #3

April 22nd, 2021 at 7pm

The partner team invited community members, stakeholders, and agencies to a final virtual town hall to review the concept for the CHEERS study area. Over 140 people participated. Partner organizations and local CDCs were invited to speak about ongoing engagement related to CHEERS and other complimentary efforts. Cleveland Metroparks spoke about ongoing efforts to continue improving visitor amenities along the lakefront, including a new investment in a comfort station at E. 72nd, and continued engagement with adjacent neighborhoods, stakeholders, residents, foundations, and local, state, and federal agencies. The partners also touched on current efforts to secure additional funding and support by building a coalition that includes the existing five project partners, the Black Environmental Leaders (BEL), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), other stakeholders, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. The Black Environmental Leaders spoke about the mission and vision of their organization, how it aligned with the goals of the CHEERS effort, and their role as a partner for future phases of the CHEERS project. Famicos Foundation, one of the local CDCs, spoke about its ongoing mission, its role in the CHEERS community outreach, a current master planning effort for the neighborhood, and upcoming engagement events through its “Ignite! Neighbor Nights” every third Thursday. Finally, Bike Cleveland spoke about the ongoing Safe Routes to Parks effort, which is undertaking additional neighborhood engagement focused on access and removal

of barriers from Superior Avenue, E. 55th Street, and E. 72nd Street to the lakefront park spaces. The effort is a partnership between the SCSDC, Cleveland Metroparks, and Cleveland Kent Station Urban Design Collaboration. The meeting ended with a question and answer session geared at addressing participant comments and questions about the proposed plan, implementation and phasing, and adjacent efforts.

EMBRACE THE LAKE WALKSHOPS

April 24th, 25th and 26th 2021 (4 tour routes, 3 time slots)

The second set of walkshops followed the April 22nd Community Town Hall, where the proposed concept plan was revealed. The walkshops provided an opportunity for participants to engage with conceptual design on-site, envisioning the proposed changes from the ground. Tour routes included the area adjacent to E. 55th Street, E. 72nd Street, North Gordon Park, and the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve. Participants were also encouraged to share their impressions of the tour areas as well as suggestions for further improvements. There were over 60 registrants for the second set of walkshops. In their written reflections, participants shared their excitement about the proposed plan as well as appreciation for the walkshop format.

Common themes that emerged from participant suggestions in this round of walkshops included the desire for viewshed improvements through the removal of obstructions, increased seating (especially around prime areas for sunset viewing), new opportunities to access the water, nature programming, improved connections between Gordon Park and the lakefront, expanded and better wayfinding and interpretive signage, improved and expanded restroom facilities, picnic shelters, improved and expanded public transit connections, interventions to reduce sound pollution from I-90, and moving parking away from the shoreline.



“More amenities – bike parking, signage, places to sit and picnic.”

– Walkshop Participant

- Team member leads a Walkshop group at E. 55th Marina. (Cleveland Metroparks)
- Walkshop group pauses near the E. 55th fishing area. (Cleveland Metroparks)
- A team member provides an overview of the draft plan. (Cleveland Metroparks)



60+
COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
CONTRIBUTED!

Goals & Aspirations

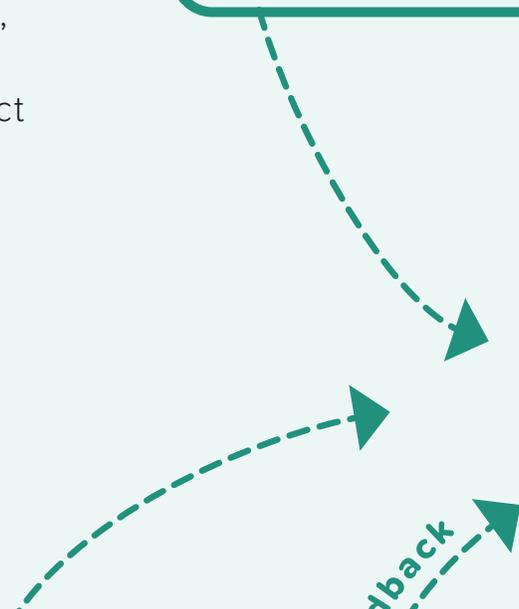
The CHEERS engagement and design process focused on creating a resilient lakefront that responds to the current and future needs of the community and stakeholders as well as the environment. Each of the various desires and goals were factored into the creation of the plan and projects. Many of these aspirations – connectivity, access, creation of habitat – were shared amongst the project partners, stakeholders, and community members.

- + Recreation (fishing, picnics)
- + Trails / Walkways
- + Increase Natural Areas
- + Create “go-to” Destination
- + Connect Park Spaces

CLEVELAND METROPARKS

ODOT

- + Reduce Maintenance Costs
- + Improve Safety (wave action)
- + Decrease Salting / Icing



CHEERS



THE COMMUNITY

ODNR

- + Aquatic Restoration
- + Maximize Natural Habitat
- + Improve Environmental Resiliency

CITY OF CLEVELAND

- + Access & Connectivity
- + Recreation (fishing, picnic)
- + Equity (east side)
- + Cohesive Lakefront (city asset, bolster for tourism)

ERS!

THE UNITY

New Programming
(picnic, BBQ,
watersports,
education)

Natural
Spaces

Trails

feedback

- + Dredge Material Storage
- + Beneficial Use Program
- + Connect People to the Water

PORT OF CLEVELAND





Partnerships & Coalition Building

In order to deliver a vision for the lakefront that has a viable pathway to implementation, the planning effort needed to leverage the strength of partners with vested interest in the future and resiliency of the lakefront and adjacent communities. A collaborative partnership of five regional and local agencies – *Cleveland Metroparks*, *the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)*, *the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)*, *the City of Cleveland*, and *the Port of Cleveland* – was formed to spearhead the CHEERS initiative with grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The formation of this partnership was motivated by a shared urgency to awaken, enrich, and protect the lake for future generations and build upon past visioning and planning work to push beyond conceptual ideas into projects primed for implementation. The partners bring complimentary goals to the project.

COALITION BUILDING

A key goal of the engagement process was building excitement and support in surrounding communities, stakeholder groups, and local organizations and agencies. To facilitate engagement and help guide and structure recommendations, the project partners created two advisory bodies – the Project Team and the Stakeholder Committee. These groups helped set the stage to mobilize the involvement of the community and local organizations and institutional partners in making improvements to the lakefront a reality.

◀ Workshop participants stop for a moment of play at North Gordon Park. (Cleveland Metroparks)

✔ Member organizations and representatives on the Partner, Project Team, and Stakeholder Committee.



Project Team

The Project Team provided overarching guidance for the process to ensure consistency with project goals and regulatory framework(s). The group included members of the project partners, agencies, interest groups, and community organizations with a vested interest in the future of the area. This advisory body participated in eight interactive and participatory workshops throughout the process to discuss key milestones and developments.

Stakeholder Committee

The Stakeholder Committee included a larger network of interested groups, potential future partners, private entities adjacent to the study area, cultural and educational institutions, and local representatives. This group participated in five participatory workshops to provide a sounding board for testing ideas and concepts before being presented to the larger community. This group was a critical resource for generating public interest and aiding in outreach and engagement events during the pandemic.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

To improve community outreach, the team set up partnerships with local CDCs. This effort was geared at not just improving the reach of the CHEERS effort, but also helping to forge new community-based partnerships to grow local capacity and steward the outcome of the plan. Throughout the process, the team held community engagement coordination meetings outside of the Project Team and Stakeholder Committee meetings to ensure that current efforts aligned with community partner schedules and events.

This was especially important since one of the key goals of the process was creating projects that provide crucial amenities and services to existing neighborhood residents. The partners and planning team worked with the CDCs, and will continue to work together through implementation, to maintain housing affordability, avoid or mitigate displacement of current residents, and encourage redevelopment and investment in an equitable manner.

Black Environmental Leaders (BEL)

Black Environmental Leaders Association stands as stewards of the natural and built environment through collaboration and partnership. They work to raise awareness and advocate for environmental and economic justice. The group provides a forum for community environmental education that can serve as a basis of a deeper understanding and commitment to land, water, air, transportation, and energy issues that impact the economic outcomes in communities through the lenses of health, diversity, inclusion, and equity. BEL provided a forum to share ideas and receive feedback with their core group and helped distribute information to its larger network of organizations and members. BEL will be a key partner in the next phases of design and implementation of the project.

Famicos Foundation

Famicos Foundation is a local CDC that serves the Glenville, Hough, and St. Clair-Superior neighborhoods. The organization was founded by Sr Henrietta Gorris 50 years ago with the mission to empower residents to create an engaged, vibrant, diverse, healthy neighborhood, where residents choose to stay, invest, and help shape a “neighborhood of choice.” Their work

focused on strengthening housing markets, supporting better land reutilization, providing impactful urban amenities, promoting community-supportive commercial efforts, integrating transportation and mobility access, and promoting active living and access to health foods. Famicos provided support throughout the CHEERS planning process by distributing postcards, flyers, and other outreach materials, communicating planning efforts and engagement events to their residents, providing space for the planning team to table and speak at events, and participating actively in the Stakeholder Committee and Project Team meetings. Famicos and its members will be crucial partners in the next phases of engagement and planning for the CHEERS area.

Midtown Cleveland Inc. & AsiaTown

MidTown Cleveland Inc is a local CDC that serves the MidTown Neighborhood and AsiaTown. Their mission is to leverage the community’s diverse assets to develop a dynamic neighborhood that unites the city’s downtown and innovation districts. This supports the vision for MidTown as a connected community that provides an inclusive place for people to innovate, create, prosper, and live. Throughout the process they provided key pathways to help reach underserved and underrepresented populations including recent immigrants and non-English speaking residents. MidTown distributed materials to their residents, provided space for the planning team to engage with residents, and actively participated in the Stakeholder Committee and Project Team meetings. Moving into future phases of the project, MidTown and AsiaTown will be critical partners to help continue building a strong community coalition and supporting access to the lake.

St. Clair Superior Development Corporation (SCSDC)

The St. Clair Superior Development Corporation (SCSDC) has been serving as the St. Clair neighborhood CDC for over 40 years. Its mission is to connect people, expand opportunity, and build livable, healthy, and inclusive places. The SCSDC was an active participant in the Stakeholder and Project Team Meetings and distributed outreach materials and publicized CHEERS engagement events throughout the process. At the beginning of 2021, the SCSDC began working in partnership with Bike Cleveland, Cleveland Metroparks, and the Cleveland Kent State Urban

Design Collaborative on the Safe Routes to Parks effort to better connect adjacent communities to the eastern lakefront. SCSDC will be a key member of the community coalition as the CHEERS study moves into future phases of design, engagement, and implementation.

University Circle Inc (UCI)

University Circle Inc. (UCI) is a local CDC that serves the University Circle neighborhood. Its vision for University Circle is a vibrant and complete neighborhood without borders. The organization is working to create a community experience that connects all Clevelanders to the city's center of culture, healing, and learning by developing new residential and visitor experiences, keeping the neighborhood clean and safe for residents and visitors, connecting and revitalizing main corridors (e.g., Euclid Avenue and Main Street), and creating active and inviting places and spaces for all people to enjoy. UCI was an active partner throughout the planning process by participating in the Stakeholder Committee and Project Team meetings and distributing project and outreach material. UCI and its members will continue to be an integral community partner as the CHEERS study moves forward with additional design and engagement.

LESSONS LEARNED AND WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

The CHEERS planning process laid the foundation for increased coalition and relationship building between the five partner organizations and local CDCs and community organizations, but there is much more to be done. These activities and partnerships led to an increased use of existing parks by neighborhood residents and increased awareness of the eastern lakefront as a key community asset. Continued communication between the public, stakeholders, and project partners to emphasize project benefits, new community partnerships and coalitions, provide honest and transparent expectations for phasing and timelines, and demonstrating short-term wins by being responsive and taking action are crucial to full realization of the CHEERS vision.



BLACK ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

Building Long-Term Partnerships

Black Environmental Leaders

Engagement activities and coordination with local CDCs led to new partnerships with organizations like the Black Environmental Leaders (BEL). BEL advocates and provides resources for black communities that often bear a disproportionate share of the harmful impact of environmental hazards due to a lack of political and economic power. BEL's partnership with the CHEERS project represents a commitment to continued collaboration and equity in planning for recreation and environmental resources on the east side of Cleveland. They will play a central role in future phases of the project, helping to connect communities of color to the lakefront and the decision-making process.