

# Beverly Shores Beach Social Trail Project

# Fun Facts

- The “Island” - Beverly Shores residential district stretched westward to Kemil/East State Park Road, extends 2.75 miles along Lake Front Drive.
- Of the 2.75 miles, only 1,275 feet of “beach” belongs to Beverly Shores. The remainder is national park property.
- Cooperation with Indiana Dunes National Park (“IDNP”) is essential to address the social trail issue.

# What Are Social Trails? Why do we care?

- A social trail is an unofficial, user-created path that forms over time. With enough foot traffic, these paths get worn down and can look like an official trail.
- Social trails can have negative impacts to the habitats of both plants and animals in the area.
- In addition to negative impacts to the existing natural environment, social trails create added risks to people. Since they aren't designed or maintained, they can be more hazardous with uneven surfaces, ticks and poison ivy.

# History

- Discussions between the Town, our Park Board and IDNP began after the 2019 beach season during the high water period. Lake Michigan water levels reached historic highs in 2019 and 2020, more than 40 inches higher than today's levels.
- For new residents who may not be aware, the beaches, dunes and Lake Front Drive were all severely threatened by December, 2019 storms. Emergency revetment work was required along much of our lakefront to save beaches, dunes, the road and the utilities that run beneath it.
- In March, 2020 the world was hit with the COVID pandemic which complicated the emergency response. In addition, a shortage of funds and lack of fiscal partners in the emergency response at any level of government made the recovery path difficult.
- With a Town Council committed to preserving our lake front way of life and with the help of citizen volunteers, we were able to complete the revetment project with revegetation in 2021 and begin planning for future protection of our shoreline and adjacent properties.

# Fast Forward

- In the fall of 2024, the Town and IDNP jointly recommitted to the Beach Social Trail Project.
- Through visual inspection from end to end we identified over 40 existing social trails from Lake Front Drive towards Lake Michigan.
- Social trails occur along the entire length of the beach. This is not just a visitor or resident problem.

# Current conditions showing social trails











# We arrived at these recommendations:

- There needs to be a reasonable number of authorized access points for park visitors and town residents in order to stop unlimited trail creation by visitors and residents. Trails are needed at all park and town facilities and at roads that intersect with the beach.
- Authorized access points need to be established today even if there is little to no beach because residents and visitors are currently using the social trails to get to the revetment.
- Authorized access points should include hardened trails, possibly blue beach mats in some places, alternative surfaces in others, to the top edge of the revetment, where storms would not impact the trail.
- While creating sand ramps over the revetment is preferred due to ease of installation and cost, certain locations will require stairs over the revetment to the beach. The stairs need to be removeable in nature.
- Consistent signage should be placed at authorized beach access points as well as at existing unauthorized locations. Signs should be placed at both the street level and the beach/revetment level.
- Fencing should be used as an additional deterrent until social trails can rehabbed and behavior can be changed.
- Education of town residents and visitors should occur through newsletter articles, presentations, and public meetings. Town and park websites should have maps and language to promote approved beach access. An art project could illustrate the problems caused by social trails and/or illustrate the potential effect of restoration and be attached to beach access signs.
- A rehabilitation plan will be needed for the social trails that are closed.

With the busy summer season approaching, we decided that for 2025 we cannot realistically address all the recommendations so we settled on two:

- Begin establishing authorized access points and placing signage along Lake Front Drive designating both authorized and unauthorized access points.
- Begin educating town residents and visitors.

# Authorized Trails

- For town residents and our visitors, all Lake Front Drive intersections with the exception of Hutchison are designated as authorized trails. The unimproved Palmer Avenue right of way with designated resident parking is added as an authorized trail.
- For areas west of Derby Ditch, IDNP would designate East Start Park Road, Windsor Ave, Dunbar Ave, the 15-minute parking area and Lake View as authorized trails
- All other existing trails will be considered unauthorized.

# Map 1: Western Beverly Shores Beach Access Locations



1, East State Park Road (Kemil)	Town	NPS Kemil Beach parking lot with amenities
2. Windsor Avenue	Park	NPS Lustron and Meyer houses
3. Dunbar Avenue	Park	NPS Dunbar Beach parking lot with amenities
4. 15-Min Parking (Rostone House)	Park	NPS parking lot with existing boardwalk
5. Derby Avenue (Ditch)	Town	Town parking. Heavily used by residents and visitors
6. Lake View	Park	NPS Lake View parking lot with amenities
7. Broadway (Rebora Plaza)	Town	Town Rebora Plaza parking lot and gazebo
8. Greatwater Avenue	Park	Town street intersection

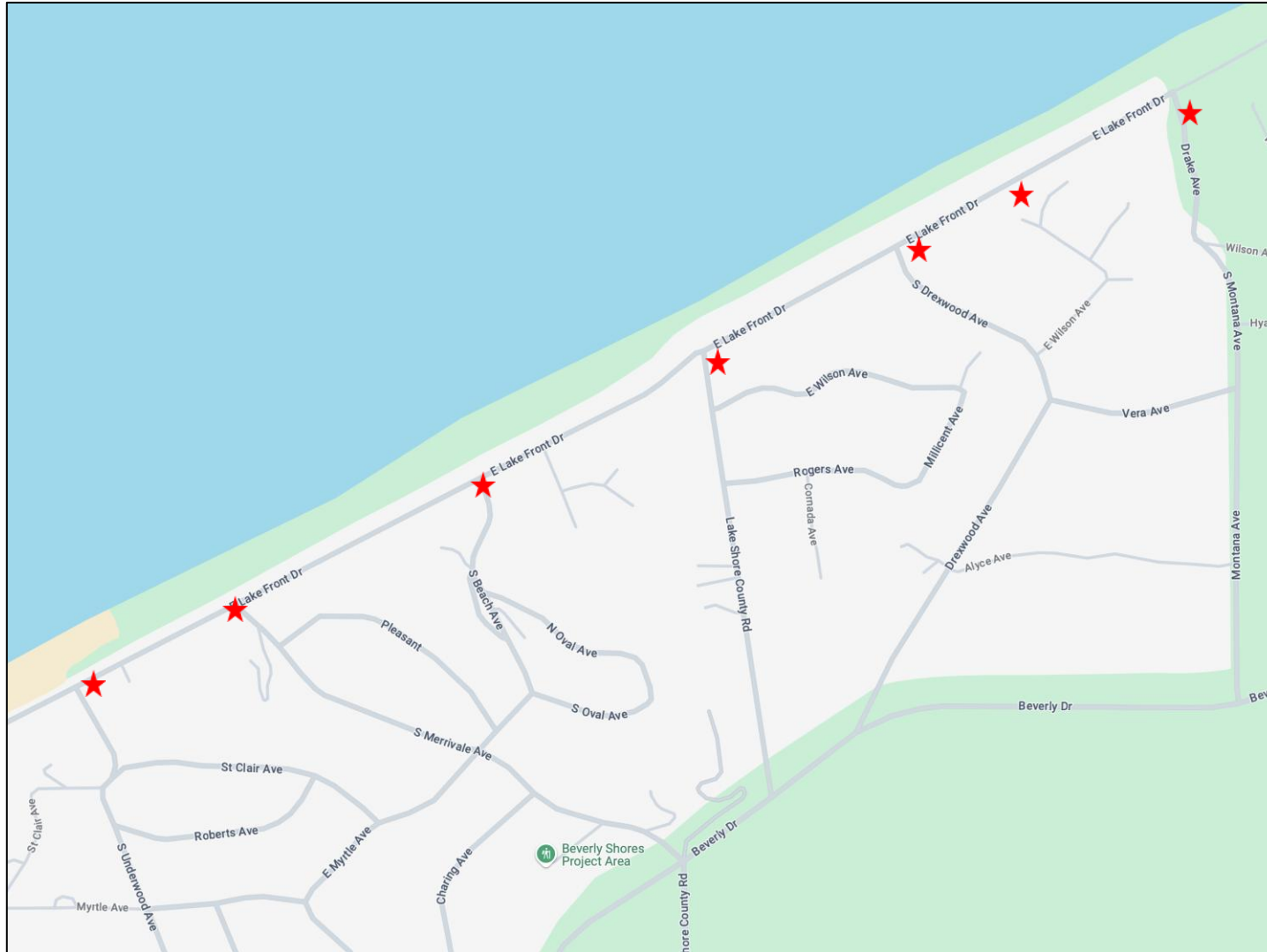
## Map 2: Central Beverly Shores Beach Access Locations.



6. Lake View	Park	NPS Lake View parking lot with amenities
7. Broadway (Rebora Plaza)	Town	Town Rebora Plaza parking lot and gazebo
8. Greatwater Avenue	Park	Town street intersection
9. Crest-Lane	Park	Town street intersection
10. Shore Avenue	Town	Town street intersection with town parking
11. Underwood Avenue	Park	Town street intersection
12. Merrivale Avenue	Park	Town street intersection
13. Beach Avenue	Park	Town street intersection with town parking



# Map 3: Eastern Beverly Shores Beach Access Locations.



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|-----|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 11. | Underwood Avenue                   | Park        |
|     | intersection                       | Town street |
| 12. | Merrivale Avenue                   | Park        |
|     | intersection                       | Town street |
| 13. | Beach Avenue                       | Park        |
|     | intersection with town parking     | Town street |
| 14. | Lake Shore County Road             | Town        |
|     | intersection with town parking     | Town street |
| 15. | Drexwood Avenue                    | Town        |
|     | intersection with town parking     | Town street |
| 16. | Palmer Avenue                      | Park        |
|     | intersection with town parking     | Town street |
| 17. | Drake Avenue (Montana Avenue)      | Town        |
|     | intersection / NPS Solomon Enclave | Town street |

- As this is all coming together hurriedly with an effort to have the two steps completed before the Memorial Day weekend, there are a few things yet to be addressed.
- We will continue working with our Town Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, IDNP and community organizations to design, create and install signage.
- IDNP is a willing partner in our efforts but its commitment is hampered by recent changes in NPS operations and funding. We do not know what it will be able to contribute to the project at present.
- There is a significant amount of work to do over a short two weeks to make it happen. Today is a start. We don't know whether we will be able to deliver on signs in such a short time frame but we will try.
- We will count on our residents to embrace the plan to restore and preserve our delicate environment by sticking to designated trails and educating their guests to do the same.