

Shoop Park Project Summary for Elected Officials

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Wind Point / Shoop Park is a recognized birding area.

Regional birding records and eBird observations show that more than 270 bird species have been documented in the Wind Point / Shoop Park area.

Bird use at Wind Point is tied to several habitat types, not just tree canopy.

Species recorded in the area generally use four major habitat groupings: open water/lake habitat, shoreline/beach habitat, open land/meadow habitat, and trees/woodland habitat. Just over 60% of birds known to use the area *do not* utilize the tree/woodland habitat. The high number of species observed at Wind Point is best understood because of habitat diversity and shoreline geography. Trees and shrubs are one part of that habitat picture, but they are not the only factor driving bird diversity at this location.

This discussion involves two separate projects.

It is important to distinguish between:

1. Shoreline stabilization and bluff resiliency and
 2. Golf course redevelopment
- These are related to the same property, but they are different project components with different environmental considerations and different purposes.

The shoreline/bluff work is a resiliency and infrastructure issue.

The east edge of the property includes a bluff along Lake Michigan that has experienced significant erosion. During the January 2020 high-water and storm event, major bluff failure occurred and trees and soil were lost into the lake. The existing bluff edge is unstable, and vegetation along that edge can contribute to continued instability through root leverage, wind loading, and associated soil movement.

Tree and shrub removal along the bluff is tied to the repair work.

To stabilize the bluff and install shoreline protection measures, vegetation along the bluff edge would need to be removed to allow access and construction and to reduce ongoing destabilization. This is not simply a vegetation removal issue; it is part of a shoreline protection and resiliency project responding to documented erosion and infrastructure concerns.

The existing golf course canopy has value, but much of it is made up of common or lower-value species.

The Forestry Division inventory of golf course trees shows that a large share of the existing canopy is dominated by a relatively small group of species, including silver maple, green ash, white ash, Norway maple, and honey locust. 40% (74 individual trees) of the course trees are made up of these species. In addition, 55 of the 184 trees on the course are under 10 inches in diameter, and due to their small size, currently provide relatively limited canopy benefit.

Several of the dominant species have management or ecological limitations.

Norway maple is non-native and provides relatively limited wildlife value compared with higher-value native species. Norway maple is recognized by the DNR as a species with invasive tendencies and the ability to spread into natural areas.

Ash has provided canopy value historically, but because these trees are highly vulnerable to emerald ash borer and require ongoing treatment to remain viable, they do not represent durable long-term habitat.

Silver maple supports more insect life than some of the other common species on the site, but it is also relatively short-lived and more prone to decay and storm damage, which limits its long-term reliability.

Honeylocust is a native tree, but compared with higher-value species, it supports relatively low insect diversity.