



Department of City Development  
City Plan Commission  
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee  
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

Lafayette L. Crump  
Commissioner

Vanessa L. Koster  
Deputy Commissioner

12<sup>th</sup> Ald. District  
Ald. Perez

**CITY PLAN COMMISSION  
ZONING REPORT**

**File No.** [230829](#)

**Location:** 300 W. Lincoln Avenue

**Applicant/  
Owner:** Milwaukee Public Schools (Recreation Department)

**Current  
Zoning:** Parks (PK) and Harbor District Riverwalk Site Plan Review Overlay Zone ([SPROZ](#))

**Proposal:** This file relates to the approval of the Riverwalk and site elements along 300 W. Lincoln Avenue, on the west side of the Kinnickinnic River, north of W. Lincoln Avenue, relative to the Harbor District Riverwalk Site Plan Review Overlay Zone, in the 12th Aldermanic District.

Milwaukee Public Schools – Recreation Department (Milwaukee Rec) is proposing substantial improvements to the 8.24 acre Lincoln Playfield, marking the first major set of improvements since the initial construction phase in the early to mid-1900's. Improvements to the playfield will include new asphalt walking loop, upgrades to the tennis and basketball courts, fieldhouse renovation, ADA compliance, riverfront restoration, kayak access, northern overlook, stormwater bioswales, shade structures, site furnishings and new fencing. A new Riverwalk segment will also be constructed on the east side of the site, along the Kinnickinnic River.

On December 18, 2018, the Common Council adopted a resolution approving and creating the Harbor District Riverwalk SPROZ as well as a resolution establishing preliminary design standards for the SPROZ. The design standards were subsequently amended in 2019 and replaced with detailed design standards that were developed specially for the portion of the Milwaukee Riverwalk that will be developed within the Harbor District. This site is within the SPROZ. As such, the proposed design of the Riverwalk and site elements within the 50' overlay zone are subject to the standards of the Harbor District Riverwalk SPROZ. Within the 50' Riverwalk overlay zone, there is also a Riverwalk Zone that is a minimum of 15' or 25' wide depending on the typology. The Riverwalk Zone is an area that includes the Riverwalk Trail, landscaping, and amenities.

**Existing Conditions:** The playfield is bordered by an 85' wide steep forested embankment sloped down to the Kinnickinnic River. Along the riverbank, the WI-Dept. of Natural Resources has identified a single wetland feature located within the Project Area, and is subject to frequent flooding events as the result of the fluctuating water levels of the adjacent river. The steep slope of the embankment is broken up with a 3' – 6" ledge that has a well-trodden path that dips into the existing tree canopy and follows the river. This naturalized path provides a unique amenity within this corridor.

**Playfield Development:** Significant community engagement by Milwaukee Rec guided the programmatic and aesthetic design considerations beyond what is defined by the Milwaukee Rec branding and design standards. Accessibility and universal design were top priorities, and guided the decisions regarding extensive regrading of the site to allow for an accessible route throughout the site. The park will continue to be intended for active recreation and will include renovated tennis courts and basketball courts with new fencing and furnishings, along with updated recreation clearances for ball play. New lighting and bleachers will be provided for the large field, and shade structures with picnic tables will be provided as well.

**Riverfront Development:** Milwaukee Rec and their consultant team coordinated with Harbor District, Inc. (HDI) while developing the riverfront plans. After review of the existing vegetation, existing topography and anticipated construction activities, Milwaukee Rec is proposing an upland river trail that sits partially outside of the 50' overlay zone. The location of this trail allows for the following objectives:

- Preserves mature tree canopy and native understory colonies
- Maintains naturalized footpath to provide a secondary pedestrian experience with more natural elements
- Maintains the unique natural environment set within the industrial corridor.

The Riverwalk design standards do allow flexibility on placement of the Riverwalk for unique circumstances such as this. The development along the southern trailhead will include a new kayak drop-off with natural outcropping stone access down to the river adjacent to a pipe kayak launch.

**Trail:** The Lincoln Playfield falls within the Multi-Use Typology (requiring a 25' Riverwalk Zone) and the asphalt trail will allow for bicycle access with a 14' wide asphalt trail, striped with (2) 6' lanes for 2 directional traffic. All vertical amenities will be set 12" off of the asphalt trail edge to provide a clear space of 16' minimum.

The Riverwalk trail will extend to the northern limits on the property in anticipation of the Harbor District's development of the properties to the north. Discussions on this future development have guided Milwaukee Rec in refining northern grading, demolition work and overlook location. The dead-end terminus

at the north end is anticipated to be a temporary condition and will soon provide a seamless connection to the north.

**Design Standards:**

Overlay Standard	Project Proposal
<b><i>Site Specific Considerations</i></b>	
<i>Public Access Points:</i> Identity and/or Directional Signage shall be provided where the multiuse path intersects with streets or other public access points.	Public access points are located at the south end along W. Lincoln Av. and at several points within the playfield. There will also be one kayak launch at the southern edge of the property that includes access to the water's edge. No structures will be protruding into the water. A small identity sign will be located at the Riverwalk entrance along Lincoln Av.
<i>Public Right-of-Way Connection:</i> Minimum of 12' wide, connects directly to the Riverwalk and sidewalk.	The south access point has a 14 ft wide trail connecting to public right of way.
<b><i>Riverwalk Typology &amp; Width</i></b>	
<i>Riverwalk Typology:</i> Width of Riverwalk Zone depends on the type of path and the adjacent land use.	The Riverwalk is a Multi-use Typology and the Riverwalk Zone is minimally 25 ft wide for this site. Due to the existing natural conditions of the site, some parts of the 14' wide path extend outside of the zone. This will allow the path to be set at the top of an existing slope to minimize erosion and impacts to established plants.
<b><i>Pavement Materials</i></b>	
<i>Primary Materials</i> listed in the design standards shall be used for the primary Riverwalk Path.	Primary material will be asphalt.
<i>Supplementary / Accent Materials</i> are permitted for plazas and gathering spaces along the Riverwalk. These materials shall not be used for the primary route of travel. ADA accessibility should be considered when designing gathering spaces.	Supplemental/accent material will include an existing natural dirt path that will continue to be maintained and is located within the 50' zone.
The Riverwalk Trail has no more than a zero (0) to five (5) percent longitudinal slope and no more than a 1.5% cross-slope to comply with all relevant and current codes, standards, and regulations.	The proposed trails meet this standard.

<b><i>Furnishings</i></b>	
Benches, tables, and trash receptacles should meet required standards for quantity, placement and product specifications.	4 benches, 3 tables and 7 trash receptacles will be placed along the Riverwalk as shown on the site plan. The MKE Rec standard furnishings will be utilized.
Along hard or River-Dependent use edge conditions, railings or guardrails are required where pathways are located within three feet of the water's edge, except where the Riverwalk is adjacent to boat docking or a marine operation area.	Railings and guardrails are not proposed.
If applicable, the standard for fencing is not limited to a single design type, however quality and durable materials are required.	15 feet of fencing is proposed in order to provide a vehicular metal gate for MPS and maintenance vehicles. This gate separates the kayak launch drop off and Riverwalk for pedestrian safety.
<b><i>Lighting</i></b>	
Lighting should meet required standards for placement, height, fixture specifications and color temperature.	The proposed lighting fixtures meet all the required design standards and will follow typical Milwaukee Rec sections in other park locations.
<b><i>Landscaping</i></b>	
Design standards require 10% of total square footage to include landscaping elements and 1 shade tree to be provided for every 40 linear feet of frontage.	The total Riverwalk square footage is 20,979, with 851 lineal feet of river frontage. 33% of the total Riverwalk area includes landscaping. 22 trees are proposed. Of those, 7 existing trees are in good condition and will remain (meets requirement). The only turf grass within the 25' zone is at the playfield. Low-mow grass is located elsewhere along the Riverwalk to promote the use of the park for recreation, without using sod.
<b><i>Stormwater Management</i></b>	
Stormwater management requirements relate to the area of impervious area and specific green infrastructure strategies.	Green infrastructure proposed for the site includes greenways/vegetated buffers, bioswales, wetlands, rain gardens, native landscaping, and underground/aboveground storage.
<b><i>Upland and Aquatic Habitat</i></b>	
Riverwalk design must incorporate at least one upland habitat opportunity.	2 upland habitat elements are proposed, including increased

	landscape areas and butterfly/pollinator gardens
<b>50' Overlay, Building and Sites</b>	
Buildings and structures are prohibited within the Riverwalk Zone section, except for structures provided for public use.	No structures are proposed within the Riverwalk Zone.
High quality façade materials are encouraged, and certain façade materials such as metal building walls, concrete masonry units and simulated stucco products are restricted for façade walls, both parallel and perpendicular to the river, that occur in the 50-foot Riverwalk Overlay Zone.	N/A
Type A signage is required for all signs located in the Riverwalk Overlay Zone. These requirements include individual letter wall signs, monument style free-standing signs, and other features associated with higher quality signage as found in Section 295-407 of the Zoning Code of Ordinances.	N/A

**Adjacent Land Use:** Industrial uses are to the north of this site. Single-family residences are to the west, and the Kinnickinnic River is to the east. Single- and two-family residences and the Milwaukee Police Department District 2 building are located to the south.

**Consistency with Area Plan:** This proposed Riverwalk in Milwaukee Recreation’s Lincoln Playfield is located within the Harbor District Plan Area and the Harbor District Water and Land Use Plan (2017). This Riverwalk is significant in the implementation of the Riverwalk catalytic project in the plan (page 122) – a new Riverwalk system to extend along the entire western shore of the Harbor District, from the Broadway Bridge on the Milwaukee River on the north to the Chase Avenue Bridge on the Kinnickinnic River to the south, and mirrored on the eastern shore of the Kinnickinnic River. The Plan recommends that a new shared use path/trail/Riverwalk be developed in Lincoln Playfield to connect the riverfront portions of the park to other park amenities, streets, Baran Park just south, and other future Riverwalk extensions to provide easy access for residents and visitors (p. 97 & 126). The proposed Riverwalk in Milwaukee Recreation’s Lincoln Playfield is consistent with the Harbor District Water & Land Use Plan.

**Previous City Plan Commission Action:** 12/3/2018 – The City Plan Commission recommended approval the establishment of the Harbor District Riverwalk Site Plan Review Overlay Zone (SPROZ) and

approved design standards for the SPROZ. (FN 180945 & 180946)

5/27/2020 – The City Plan Commission recommended approval of the resolution to amend the Harbor District Riverwalk SPROZ design standards (FN 191898)

**Previous Common  
Council Action:**

12/18/2018 – The Common Council approved the establishment of the Harbor District Riverwalk Site Plan Review Overlay Zone (SPROZ) and approved design standards for the SPROZ. (FN 180945 & 180946)

5/27/2020 – The Common Council approved the resolution to amend the Harbor District Riverwalk SPROZ design standards (FN 191898)

**Staff  
Recommendation:**

Since the proposed Riverwalk is consistent with the Harbor District Water and Land Use Plan and the Harbor District Riverwalk design standards, staff recommends approval of the subject file.