

## WENDT BEACH PARK

### DESCRIPTION

Wendt Beach is a 164-acre, multi-purpose park with both beach-related, passive activities and active recreational offerings. The park features the historic Wendt Mansion, a stony beach (none to little sand), and vegetated bluff and numerous soccer fields. The park has two distinct characteristics; one is the expanse of mowed soccer fields and open lawns upon entering at the eastern, street-front edge of the park; the other is the more natural heritage setting near the Lake, with the historic Mansion, outbuildings, natural shoreline and large wooded areas. Each serve different user types and activities. A park roadway bisects the park from east to west.

Just inland from the south end of the beach is a forested wetland area with protected plant species such as Trillium. Roughly half the park is forested, mostly on the south side. A bluff approximately 15 feet high runs the entire inland edge of the beach.

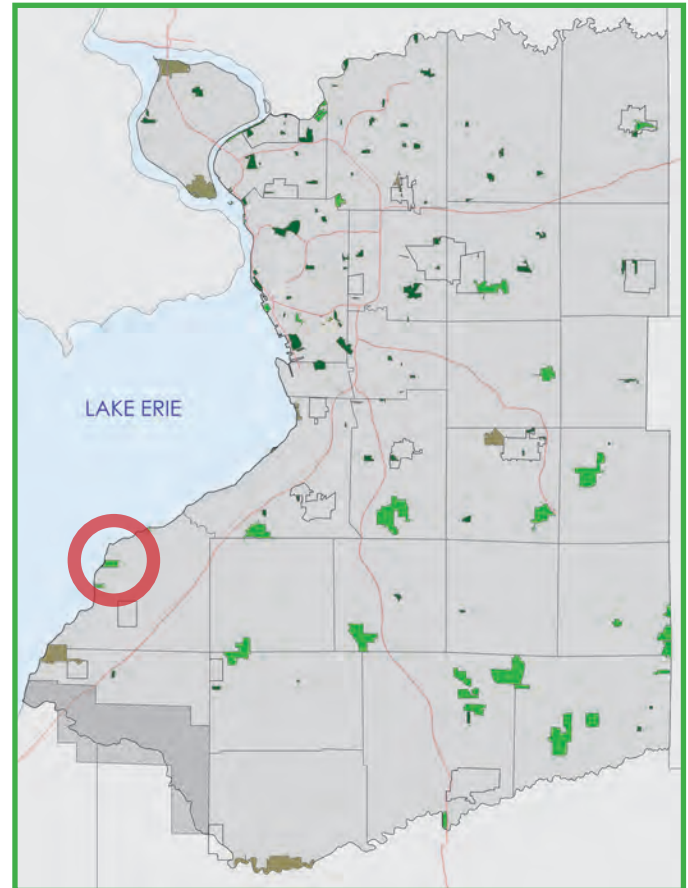
### PARK AND AREA HISTORY

The Wendt beach property has a long and storied history. The Park sits on the old estate of Henry W. Wendt, Jr., which the family later renamed "The Ridgewood." The existing historic Wendt Mansion, with outbuildings and old stable structure, is reminiscent of an earlier era of influence, when the wealthy families of Buffalo recreated along the lakeshore during the summer months. The structure was built in the 1800s along the top of the dune and later moved to its current location. The interior of the main house is made up of beautiful hardwood floors, a spiral staircase and railings of dark wood, window seats and bay windows, many of which overlook the Lake and beach areas.

Some of the outbuildings were part of the earlier estate. This includes the log cabin (once a playhouse and guest house), a caretaker's cottage, a garage with chauffeur's quarters, horse stables (now public restrooms), and the old pump house, where water brought in from the Lake was stored in a large tank and pumped through pipes to outside spigots for watering the gardens.



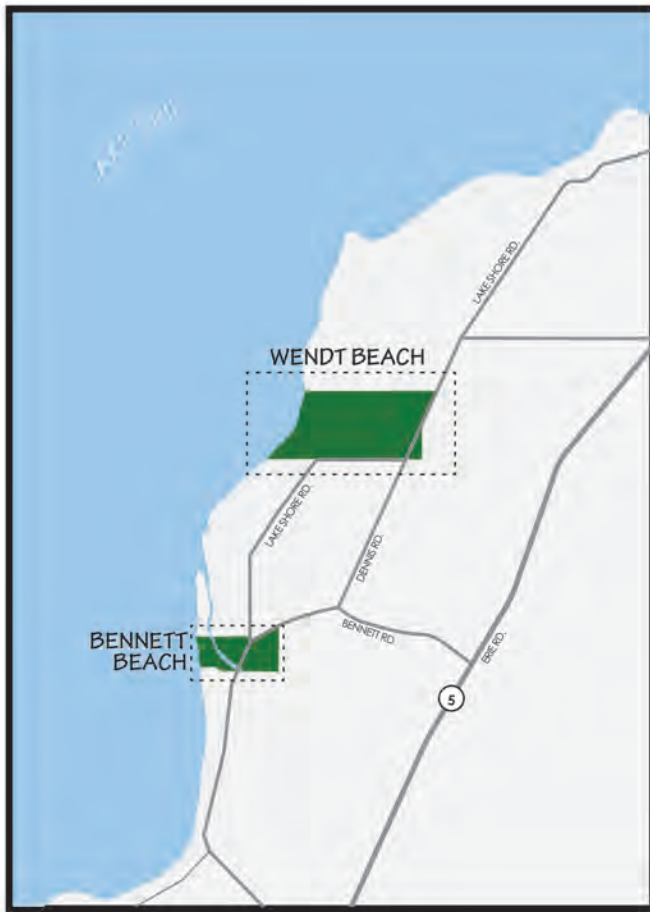
Beautiful views of Lake Erie



Park Location Map: Wendt Beach is located in the Town of Evans, a short distance away from Bennett Beach off of Lakeshore Road

### PARK SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

- **Restore the historic Wendt Mansion.** Identify potential adaptive re-use that compliments the park uses.
  - Consider a public/private partnership when redeveloping this historic structure.
  - Develop / restore a gracious landscape setting around the historic mansion with formal lawn, gardens, strolling paths, tree lined entrance road.
- **Formalize and repair large parking area near mansion and other buildings.** Size of parking area may be excessive; there may be opportunities to reduce pavement by introducing rain gardens and planting medians to capture runoff and reorganize lot.



Local context map

## LOCAL CONTEXT

Located in the Town of Evans approximately 20 miles south of Downtown Buffalo, Wendt Beach is less than one mile north of Bennett Beach and is accessible via Old Lakeshore Road. The Wendt Beach property marks a transition point along Old Lakeshore Road with the larger properties and estates to the north towards Sturgeon Point and the smaller seasonal cottage properties to the south towards the center of Evans and hamlet of Lake Erie Beach. Most of the area is rural in character.

## RECREATIONAL CONTEXT

Wendt Beach has a distinct and historic Mansion setting, which overlooks a stony beach (non-sand). Swimming is currently not allowed due to natural conditions (rocky beach, undertows) and limited staffing. Visitors must drive through a wide-open field area that is used primarily for the local soccer clubs.

Bennett Beach Park is another County-owned passive-oriented park, offering no structured playing fields or courts one mile to the south of Wendt Beach and is accessible via the Shoreline Trail.



Historic Wendt Mansion is boarded up and is not accessible



Drainage issues at parking lot



Rough rocky shoreline and limited staff prevents swimming here



## CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

- The Mansion is in need of extensive updating and repair if it is to be fully useable.
- The maintenance facility location detracts from the Heritage setting around the Mansion.
- There is no appropriate “gateway” feature for such a beautiful park setting.
- The entrance to the park (through the mowed athletic fields) gives no indication that this is actually a “beach” park.
- The parking lot near the beach is in very poor condition, especially near its entrance. Frequent ponding occurs.
- Frequent ponding also occurs in stone parking areas near the soccer fields.
- Poor playground location.
- Current storage sheds for soccer equipment are an eyesore and are out of character for the park.
- Large areas of lawn are mowed between the main parking lot and the soccer fields.
- 1 restroom near Mansion serves the entire park. A restroom may be better served near soccer fields.
- Old dilapidated picnic tables in junk pile off of trail should be removed and discarded.
- Beach is very rocky and not maintained

## RECENT PARKS DEPARTMENT PROJECTS / IMPROVEMENTS

- Wendt Mansion Study – Consultant hired to evaluate overall current conditions and cost to refurbish using today’s codes and cost.
- Turned block building into lifeguard reporting area, storage area, office space, and restroom facility.
- Electrical fuse panel upgrade at residence.
- New waterline to the residence.
- Shoreline Trail is being constructed through park. Park will feature an elevated boardwalk through portion of forested area, and will be paved and at-grade through the remainder portion of the park.



*Some scattered picnic tables throughout the park*





# MASTER PLAN WENDT BEACH

## ERIE COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE

### MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS: *Specific Action Items - Ex. (A1)*

- 1 (P: 1.0) If feasible (significant investment required), restore the historic Wendt Mansion. This is a very important "heritage" area within the County parks System. Identify potential adaptive re-use that compliments the park uses.
- 2 (C: 2.0) Formalize and repair large parking area near mansion and other buildings. Size of parking area may be excessive; there may be opportunities to reduce pavement by introducing rain gardens and planting medians to capture runoff and reorganize lot.
- 3 (P: 2.0) Possible adaptive reuse of barn structure/horse stable to open up to the arts community or other local stakeholder groups. May be able to rent out space for weddings and large gatherings to generate potential revenue.
- 4 (C: 4.0) Relocate maintenance facility away from historic mansion and to a more inconspicuous spot adjacent to the superintendent's house (off the back of the parking lot); (2003 Plan)
- 5 (C: 3.0) Undertake dune restoration; although Wendt Beach is actually a very rocky beach, it still has a use and charm that is very attractive. Engage consultant to perform studies and analysis of existing dunes and provide procedures for restoration/protection; Maintain current access point through dunes to the beach off the trail. Enhance access point with signage to encourage usage.
- 6 (P: 7.0) Maintain and enhance soccer fields; partner with Lakeshore Youth Soccer to adequately provide safe playing fields/conditions for the children.



- 7 (C: 7.0) Establish picnic groves in areas of the park not conflicting with soccer fields and heritage area; if funding is available, provide small to medium sized shelters. Shelters would see frequent rentals due to popularity over summer months.
  - 8 (C: 9.0) Possibly expand and enhance small playground currently featured near the soccer fields. Provide additional equipment suitable for all ages and abilities.
- ### MASTER PLAN HIGHLIGHTS:
- (2.0-2.1) Reduce mowing in non-recreational areas between beach and soccer fields. Expand no-mow areas and provide meadows and interpretive signage, emphasizing the ecologic benefits.
  - (C: 6.0) Provide formalized trails in wooded areas of park especially south of the main park road. Tie new trails into Shoreline Trail. Trails would have to be sensitive to wetland areas, and use the boardwalk template of the Shoreline Trail.
  - (P: 4.0-5.0) Upgrade the east side of Wendt Park to include more formalized, "structured" parking opportunities (stone or asphalt lots) and a support facility (i.e. permanent restrooms, concessions, storage) for the very large soccer crowds.

### Legend:

- Potential Major and Minor Park Gateway Locations
- Destination
- Natural Features
- Playground
- Shoreline Trail
- Park Boundary





## MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

### Key - (Project Type: Project Number)

A - Action Item: Completed at low to no cost by Parks Staff

P - Assistance or completion of project by potential partner/user group

C - Capital project

### Beach/Heritage Area (West Section):

- **(P: 1.0) If feasible (significant investment required), restore the historic Wendt Mansion.** This is a very important “heritage” area within the County parks System. Identify potential adaptive re-use that compliments the park uses.
  - Secure National Register of Historic Places status for the house and setting.
  - **(Refer to Wendt Mansion Study)** Potential uses include a wedding/ conference facility, restaurant

or tea room, meeting facility, etc.;

- Explore potential partner with local news station (Channel 2/4/7) to establish small ‘weather station’/education center utilizing the mansion’s strategic location overlooking Lake Erie;
- Pursue a public/private partnership when redeveloping this historic structure.
- Develop / restore a gracious landscape setting around the historic mansion with formal lawn, gardens, strolling paths, tree lined entrance road;
- The entire structure should be decorated with “period” furnishings. This authentic restoration could provide a “museum-like” setting, with photos and documents of the park’s history, the earlier history of the Wendt Homestead and Farm, etc. A small gift shop could be provided to sell local park-related items, historical maps, etc.

■ **Priority: High**

■ **Partner: Investor/PBN/VBN/Wendt Foundation**



Wendt Mansion restoration would require significant investment, and partnership opportunities



- **(C: 2.0) Formalize and repair large parking area near mansion and other buildings.** Size of parking area may be excessive; there may be opportunities to reduce pavement by introducing rain gardens and planting medians to capture runoff and reorganize lot.
  - Priority: High
  - Partner: In-House
- **(P: 2.0) Possible adaptive reuse of barn structure/horse stable to open up to the arts community or other local stakeholder groups.** May be able to rent out space for weddings and large gatherings.
  - Conduct formal study and analysis of horse stable building and others like the 2013 Mansion Study.
    - Priority: High
    - Partner: Investor/PBN/Wendt Foundation
- **(P:3.0) Prevent further deterioration to remaining out-buildings** in the 'heritage' area: Identify adaptive reuse opportunity.
  - Conduct formal study and analysis of remaining out-buildings like the 2013 Mansion Study.
    - Priority: High
    - Partner: Investor/PBN
- **(P: 8.0) Actively manage and protect the potential for grassland habitats which provide grassland birds protection and assistance.**
  - Priority: High
  - Partner: NYSDEC/ECSWD



Horse Stable building



Need to reorganize and reduce large parking area



All buildings at Wendt need improvements and repairs

- **(P:9.0) Remove and address invasive species.**
  - Plant and provide pollinator friendly (native) plants, including nectar sources for migrating Monarch Butterflies.
    - Priority: High
    - Partner: NYSDEC/ECSWD
- **(C: 3.0) Undertake dune restoration; although Wendt Beach is actually a very rocky beach, it still has a use and charm that is very attractive.**
  - Engage consultant to perform studies and analysis of existing dunes and provide procedures for restoration/protection;
  - Maintain current access point through dunes to the beach off the trail. Enhance access point with signage to encourage usage.
    - Priority: High
    - Partner: Consultant





View towards the beach

- **(C: 4.0) Relocate maintenance facility away from historic mansion** and to a more inconspicuous spot adjacent to the superintendent's house (off the back of the parking lot); (2003 Plan)
  - Priority: Low
  - Partner: In-House
- **(C: 5.0) Reorganize roadway and pedestrian zones to separate future "mansion" functions from public beach area** (2003 Master Plan).
  - Priority: Low
  - Partner: In-House/Consultant
- **Develop and enforce west side of park as passive beach zone**, i.e. picnicking, walking a dog, reading a book, etc.
  - Provide Adirondack chairs along the beach similar to Wilkeson Pointe and the Outer Harbor;
  - Introduce small parking/ picnic areas south of the mansion along the driveway, with turn-around loop;
  - relocate current boat storage to a more inconspicuous location, still allowing for easy access to the beach.
  - Priority: Low
  - Partner: In-House



Many people still use the beach for long walks along the water





*Cabin is featured overlooking the Lake*



*Much of the park is mowed*



*Soccer fields which are used by Lakeshore Youth Soccer*

- **(C: 1.0) Provide an interpretive “story-line” for the Park’s local history**, i.e. How and when the property was first developed?; When was the area first settled?; What’s the history behind the Wendt mansion and the farm structures?; Did Lakeshore Road once pass through the site near the dune area?; Was there a polo field on the site?; What were some significant historic happenings in the area, or in the park?; etc. (2003 Master Plan)
  - Coordinate with local historians and town agencies to gather historic data, photos, maps, etc.
  - Provide signs and interpretive plaques in key areas of the heritage section of the park.
    - **Priority: Low**
    - **Partner: In-House/Hamburg Historical Society**

#### Active Recreation (East Section):

- **(P: 7.0) Maintain and enhance soccer fields**; partner with Lakeshore Youth Soccer to adequately provide safe playing fields/conditions.
  - **Priority: High**
  - **Partner: Lakeshore Youth Soccer**
- **(A: 1.0) Improve the tree health of the park, in particular within maintained areas.**
  - Remove dead, dying, or diseased trees.
  - Prune deadwood from trees.
  - Routinely monitor the tree population for indications of pest infestations.
  - Provide new tree plantings throughout the park, particularly along the roadway edges.
  - Develop a multi-pronged approach to tree planting strategy including contracted work, in-house staff, and volunteer group plantings.
  - Develop annual tree and native planting program to restore tree canopy and improve natural character of the park.
  - Apply for funding from NYSDEC, for example, for purchase of trees and materials and for the tree inventory.
    - **Priority: High**
    - **Partner: WNY PRISM/ECSWD/Forestry**



- **(A: 2.0-2.1) Reduce mowing in non-recreational areas between beach and soccer fields.** Expand no-mow areas and provide wildflowers and meadows; Install interpretive signage emphasizing the ecologic benefits.
  - **Priority:** High
  - **Partner:** In-House
- **(C: 6.0) Provide formalized trails in wooded areas of park especially south of the main park road.**
  - Tie new trails into Shoreline Trail. New park trails can form loops from the Shoreline Trail to provide added interest and opportunities for park users.
  - New trails would have to be sensitive to wetland areas, and would need to be an elevated boardwalk like the Shoreline Trail portion.
    - **Priority:** Medium
    - **Partner:** Consultant/In-House
- **Enhance opportunities for winter activities at Wendt beach. The park is a perfect setting for numerous cross-country ski trails, etc. (2003 Master Plan)**
  - **Priority:** Medium
  - **Partner:** In-House
- **(P: 4.0-5.0) Provide larger formalized, “structured” parking opportunities (stone or asphalt lots) and a support facility (i.e. permanent restrooms, concessions, storage) for the very large soccer crowds.**
  - Parking areas should be restricted to the north side of the park road due to construction of the Shoreline Trail.
  - Coordinate with Lakeshore Youth Soccer for funding and planning for these expanded features.
    - **Priority:** Medium
    - **Partner:** Lakeshore Youth Soccer
- **(A: 4.0-4.2) Provide directional signage to the park at strategic locations:**
  - Intersection of Sturgeon Point Road and Erie Road
  - Lakeshore Road and Sturgeon Point Road
    - **Priority:** Medium
    - **Partner:** In-House



*No-mow/low-mow areas can be extended from the tree edge towards the road*



- **(C: 7.0) Establish picnic groves in areas of the park not conflicting with soccer fields and heritage area;** if funding is available, provide small to medium sized shelters. Shelters would see frequent rentals due to popularity over summer months.
  - Priority: Low
  - Partner: In-House
- **(C: 8.0) Enhance park entrance and identity at Lakeshore Road, with entrance feature.** Provide a distinct transition zone between the two park sections and distinctive entrance to the heritage area of the site, i.e. possibly establish a secondary entrance feature past the soccer fields which would lead people towards the historic mansion and lake;
  - Provide landscaping with seasonal interest.
    - Priority: Low
    - Partner: In-House
- **(C: 9.0) Possibly expand and enhance small playground currently featured near the soccer fields.**
  - Provide additional equipment suitable for all ages and abilities
  - Relocate existing playground near horse stable building to new location near soccer fields.
    - Priority: Low
    - Partner: In-House



*Small playground area near soccer fields*



*Gateway sign near Lakeshore Road*



**WENDT BEACH PARK: ACTION ITEMS**

Project Type	Project #	Recommendation	Implementation Strategies	Priority	Term	Estimated Cost
A	1.0	Increase tree health and tree canopy throughout the park. Develop a multi-pronged tree planting strategy including contracted work, in-house staff and volunteer group plantings to increase tree canopy and renew the resource over time.	Prune and/or remove trees if determined to present an increased risk to park patrons and employees. Develop an annual tree planting program.	High	Ongoing	In-House, Forestry
A	2.0	Establish “Low Mow Zones” to reduce overall maintenance and provide wildlife habitat	Expand no-mow areas and provide wildflowers and meadows	High	3-5 Years	In-House
A	2.1	Establish “Low Mow Zones” to reduce overall maintenance and provide wildlife habitat	Provide necessary signage along the “Low Mow Zones” to inform the public the reasons behind the practice and also to identify the areas to park personnel.	High	1-2 Years	In-House, Highway
A	3.0	Improve playground safety	Provide or replenish engineered fiber fall surfaces at playgrounds annually.	High	Ongoing	P.O.B.
C	3.0	Undertake dune restoration; Engage consultant to perform studies and analysis of existing dunes and provide procedures for restoration/protection	Engage a consultant to develop plans and a contractor to construct the improvements	High	6-10 Years	\$40,000
P	1.0	Prevent further deterioration and restore Wendt Mansion; Identify potential adaptive reuse that compliments park uses	Refer to partnership opportunity with PBN, coordination with possible investor, grant money	High	6-10 Years	\$2,400,000 (2013 Mansion Study)

**KEY:**

A: Action Item: Completed at low to no cost by Parks staff

C: Capital Project

P: Assistance or completion of project by potential partner/user group

POB: Parks Operating Budget



**WENDT BEACH PARK: ACTION ITEMS**

Project Type	Project #	Recommendation	Implementation Strategies	Priority	Term	Estimated Cost
P	2.0	Prevent further deterioration and restore Horse Stable structure; Identify potential adaptive reuse that compliments park uses	Refer to partnership opportunity with PBN, coordination with possible investor, grant money	High	6-10 Years	Recommended to complete formal estimate study and analysis
P	3.0	Prevent further deterioration to remaining out-buildings in the 'heritage' area: Identify adaptive reuse opportunity	Refer to partnership opportunity with PBN, coordination with possible investor, grant money	High	6-10 Years	Recommended to complete formal estimate study and analysis
P	7.0	Maintain and enhance soccer fields; partner with Lakeshore Youth Soccer to adequately provide safe playing fields/conditions.	Partner with Lakeshore Youth Soccer	High	1-2 Years	Partner
P	8.0	Actively manage and protect the potential for grassland habitats which provide grassland birds protection and assistance.	Consult with NYSDEC, ECSWD, and other professional experts.	High	1-2 Years	Partner
P	9.0	Remove and address invasive species. Plant and provide pollinator friendly (native) plants, including nectar sources for migrating Monarch Butterflies.	Consult with NYSDEC, ECSWD, and other professional experts.	High	1-2 Years	Partner
A	4.0	Provide directional signage to the park at strategic locations:	Coordination between Parks & Highways to develop and produce the sign panels, and coordinate with the road jurisdiction regarding placement of the signs.	Medium	6-10 Years	In-House
A	4.1	Intersection of Sturgeon Point Road and Erie Road	Coordination between Parks & Highways to develop and produce the sign panels, and coordinate with the road jurisdiction regarding placement of the signs.	Medium	6-10 Years	In-House





**WENDT BEACH PARK: ACTION ITEMS**

Project Type	Project #	Recommendation	Implementation Strategies	Priority	Term	Estimated Cost
A	4.2	Lakeshore Road and Sturgeon Point Road	Coordination between Parks & Highways to develop and produce the sign panels, and coordinate with the road jurisdiction regarding placement of the signs.	Medium	6-10 Years	In-House
C	1.0	Provide interpretive signage in the park:	Coordinate with historical society to develop copy and obtain images for the interpretive content.	Medium	6-10 Years	In-House
C	2.0	Improve safety and functionality of main parking lot, reduce size of lot, provide asphalt surface, striping, accessible parking spaces, planting medians, and rain gardens	Engage a consultant to develop plans and a contractor to construct the improvements	Medium	6-10 Years	\$400,000
P	4.0	Upgrade the east side of Wendt Park to include more formalized, “structured” parking opportunities (stone or asphalt lots)	Partner with Lakeshore Youth Soccer	Medium	1-2 Years	\$50,000
C	4.0	Relocate maintenance facility away from historic mansion and to a more inconspicuous spot adjacent to the superintendent’s house	Engage a consult to develop plans and a contractor to construct the improvements	Low	6-10 Years	\$200,000
C	5.0	Reorganize roadway and pedestrian zones to separate future “mansion” functions from public beach area	Engage a consultant to develop plans and a contractor to construct the improvements	Low	6-10 Years	\$75,000
C	6.0	Provide formalized trails in wooded areas of park especially south of the main park road. Tie new trails into Shoreline Trail.	New trails would have to be sensitive to wetland areas, and would need to be an elevated boardwalk like the Shoreline Trail portion.	Low	6-10 Years	\$500,000

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**WENDT BEACH PARK: ACTION ITEMS**

Project Type	Project #	Recommendation	Implementation Strategies	Priority	Term	Estimated Cost
C	7.0	Establish picnic groves in areas of the park not conflicting with soccer fields and heritage area; if funding is available, provide small to medium sized shelters. Shelters would see frequent rentals due to popularity over summer months.	Engage a consultant to develop plans and a contractor to construct the improvements	Low	6-10 Years	\$200,000
C	8.0	Enhance park entrance and identity at Lakeshore Road, with entrance feature. Provide a distinct transition zone between the two park sections and distinctive entrance to the heritage area of the site	Engage a consultant to develop sign types including copy, structure and landscape typology for each location.	Low	6-10 Years	\$35,600
C	9.0	Possibly expand and enhance small playground currently featured near the soccer fields. Provide additional equipment suitable for all ages and abilities Relocate existing playground near horse stable building to new location near soccer fields.	Engage a contractor to construct the improvements	Low	6-10 Years	\$60,000
P	5.0	Construct a support facility near soccer fields; permanent restrooms, concessions, storage)	Partner with Lakeshore Youth Soccer	Low	3-5 Years	\$350,000
P	6.0	Renovate the Log Cabin /Lifeguard station. This facility could be maximized to include a meeting room (for environmental and historic related discussions, etc.) and other potential uses.	Refer to partnership opportunity with PBN, coordination with possible investor, grant money	Low	6-10 Years	\$500,000







# SCHEMATIC PLAN WENDT BEACH - HERITAGE AREA

## ERIE COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE





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