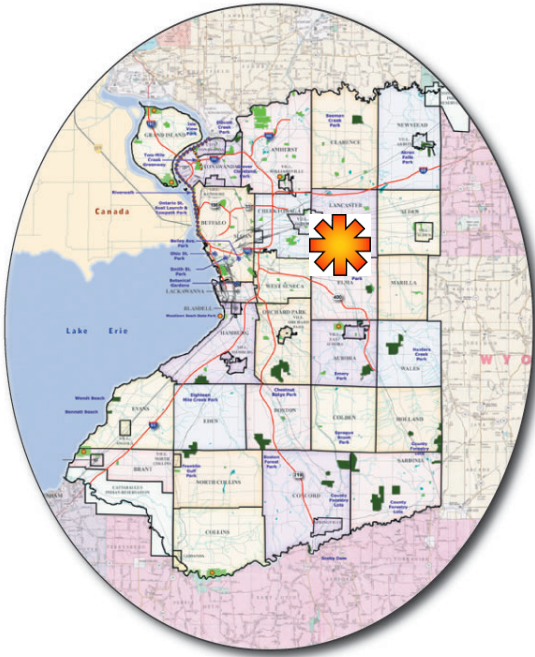




EXISTING PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES

Como Lake Park offers a wide range of both active and passive recreational opportunities. The following is a listing of current park highlights:

- Service/Maintenance Center (Labor Center)
- Superintendent's residence
- 4 Comfort Stations
- 2 Concession Stands
- Friendship Center
- Approximately 62 picnic shelters
- Lighthouse
- Manmade Lake / Dam, with natural islands
- 2 Basketball Courts
- Informal Baseball and softball Diamonds
- 4 Tennis Courts
- Ice Skating area and Skating building (Warming Hut)
- Sledding Hill
- Nature trails / Walking Paths (including Cayuga Creek Nature Trail)
- Numerous Play structures and equipment
- Bowen Road Picnic Grove
- Large, undeveloped natural area east of Bowen Road

2.3 COMO LAKE PARK

DESCRIPTION

Como Lake Park is a 534-acre park facility located in both the Village and Town of Lancaster, approximately 14 miles east of downtown Buffalo. The park was among the first four parks acquired by the County in 1926, and lies along the banks of Cayuga Creek. The park includes a dam and lake at its western end, with natural islands, extensive picnic grounds, play fields and courts, skating rink, sledding hill and nature trails. This "Heritage" park includes numerous old stone park structures that continue to enjoy heavy use by both local residents and those coming out from the urban areas to enjoy a slice of nature. In contrast to much of the manicured older park areas and picnic groves, the eastern-most section of Como Lake Park (east of Bowen Road) is an undeveloped natural zone straddling Cayuga Creek.

PARK AND AREA HISTORY

Como Lake Park was originally developed as a Village of Lancaster Municipal Park beginning in 1923. Soon thereafter, it was one of the original parks acquired by the County in 1925-26. The original acquisition totaled 120 acres, with later acquisitions adding an additional 414 acres. The Park was originally developed as a water-oriented park to serve the densely populated area along Broadway from Buffalo to the Villages of Depew and Lancaster. In fact, boating was once a popular activity in the Lake and around the islands. Archived plans show that a magnificent "Bath House" facility was designed and proposed to be built on one of the islands, but apparently never came to fruition. Original activities also included a small zoo. WPA crews handled much of the physical development of the park.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Como Lake Park is a well-known and integral part of the historic Village of Lancaster, but is somewhat "off the beaten track" from the major, highly visible east-west travel route through the area, Route 20 (Broadway). The Park sits on the southeast side of the Village, and extends westerly along the Cayuga Creek corridor. Lake Avenue forms the Park's western edge, while Bowen Road bisects the park and forms the boundary between the developed

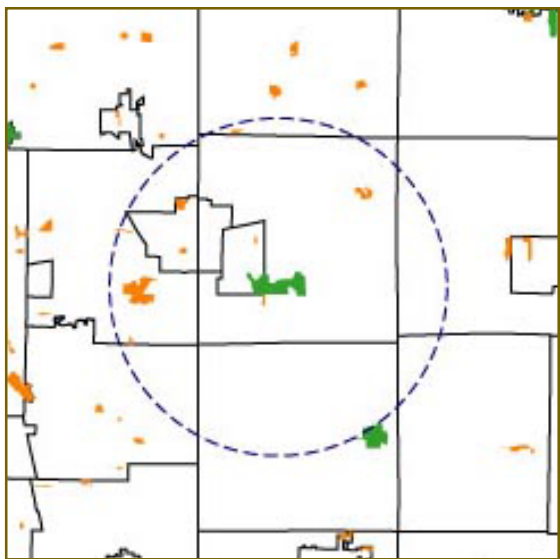
older section from the undeveloped section of the park at the eastern end.

RECREATIONAL CONTEXT

Until about 20 years ago, the area around Como Lake Park was generally rural, with the thickly settled Village of Lancaster at its western end. This large multi-purpose heritage park once provided most all recreational amenities for the Town and Village of Lancaster, as well as the Village of Depew. It also once served as a magnet for Buffalo residents, who could easily reach the park via public transportation. More recently, Lancaster has become one of Western New York’s fastest growing suburban communities, spreading development into eastern areas beyond the Park, where farms once dominated the landscape. With this recent surge in population growth also has come the demand for expanded recreational facilities. Given this, the Town and Village have looked to expand their recreational offerings to provide many new opportunities to the area residents.

CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

- *The park is showing deterioration in its older, historic stone structures*
- *The interior of the park has many large paved areas, reminding us of an era of more heavy use of certain facilities. However, the focus of the park has changed to a more passive-oriented park - - in other words, the park is not aesthetically pleasing in certain areas.*
- *Vehicular circulation and park signage is very confusing.*
- *There is a lack of directional and interpretive signage highlighting the wonderful park structures and natural features*
- *As resources and funding dwindle, a new strategy for lawn mowing needs to emerge. Currently, most of the open space in the park is mowed, including areas that are beyond the recreational use areas.*
- *There is an apparent underutilization of some of the park facilities,*
- *There are numerous outdated play structures that do not meet current safety or accessibility codes.*



PARKS WITH UNIQUE FEATURES

(WITHIN A 5-MILE RADIUS)

Village of Depew:

- Fireman’s Park
Indoor ice-skating facility
- Rehm Road Park, 55 acres
Tennis courts, basketball courts and baseball diamonds

Town of Elma:

- Elma Town Park, 63 acres
Soccer field, lighted football field, (4) tennis courts, basketball courts and baseball diamonds
- Elma Village Green Park, 28 acres
Football field, baseball diamonds and bike paths
- Knabb Road Park, 53 acres
Undeveloped park with nature trails

Town of Lancaster:

- Keysa Town Park, 10 acres
Tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball diamonds and swimming
- Meadow Lea Park, 8 acres
Volleyball courts, basketball courts and baseball diamonds
- Walden Pond Park, 70 acres
Soccer field, football field, and baseball diamonds
- Westwood Park, 149 acres
Nature trails and programs, fishing, soccer fields, football field, and baseball diamonds

PARKS WITH UNIQUE FEATURES

(WITHIN A 5-MILE RADIUS)

Village of Lancaster:

- Mechanic Street Park, 4 acres
Tennis courts

Town of Cheektowaga:

- Cedargrove Park, 12 acres
Tennis courts, baseball diamonds, basketball courts,
and a roller hockey area
- Dartwood Park, 9 acres
Tennis courts, baseball diamonds, basketball courts,
and a roller hockey area
- Kelly Park, 12 acres
Tennis courts, baseball diamonds and basketball
courts
- Stiglmeier Park, 308 acres
Football field, tennis courts, baseball diamonds,
basketball courts and nature programs
- Nob Hill Park, 7 acres
Tennis courts, baseball diamonds, basketball courts,
and a roller hockey area
- Nokomis Park, 14 acres
Baseball diamonds
- North Creek Park, 10 acres
Basketball courts
- Raymond Park, 4 acres
Tennis courts and basketball courts
- Dr. Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve, 292 acres
Nature programs and trails
- Vegola Park, 1 acres
Tennis courts and basketball courts

RECENT PARKS DEPARTMENT PROJECTS / IMPROVEMENTS

- Como Lake and two channels were dredged
- Main Road and Casino parking lot were paved
- 30' bridge was constructed on the nature trail
- Improvements to 2 large and 8 small shelters
- Removed old play equipment
- Some ditches were re-opened and riprap was installed on these banks
- 50 trees were cut due to rot and damage
- Installed 10 new swing sets and 2 large slides

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Preserve/enhance and restore Heritage Areas within the park – i.e. westernmost section of the park, lighthouse, dam and lake, islands, etc. Preserve and enhance historic setting of lawn and tree canopy;
 - Restore old stone picnic shelters and structures before building new picnic shelters and structures. (Consider the heritage “value” of these old park features for future tourism and visitor appreciation). There are too many varied picnic structures throughout the park
 - Consider park for eligibility on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Maintain and enhance “natural” wooded buffers along perimeter; This will offer more protection for the natural open space as more and more houses are built around the park
- Re-naturalize the original islands in the lake/creek to enhance park ecology and give a more naturalistic setting; reduce mowing to encourage more wildlife and natural/scenic diversity. Como Lake Park should revert back to its original intent as a passive park. Lancaster now has plenty of mowed recreation lands in other parks.
- The road network is quite confusing. Improve park circulation through consolidation of roadways and path system; consider a new “round-about” feature to better “organize” the park roadways where the southern access drive meets the internal road network.
- Restore/reconstruct former structure at the west tip of the islands (currently has wood deck cover) as park pavilion or bandshell, etc.

- Enhance Creek viewing opportunities from east to west; currently there are few, if any, spots to see the Creek from any of the picnic groves and yet it is only a short distance away. Promote the expansion of the existing “Cayuga Creek Nature Trail” system, to continue along the Creek bank in both directions, with important signage and connections to other park attractions and picnic groves.
 - Provide ADA access to important and scenic creek vista locations.
- Establish a stronger linkage between Village of Lancaster and Como Lake Park through new sidewalks (if necessary) and recreational trails, streetscape enhancements, wayfinding signage, maps, etc.; Provide clear linkages from Como Lake Park to area bicycle routes and trails.
- Provide new interpretive signage and informational kiosks that tie the park better “into the mix” with other local cultural and historical attractions.
 - Provide a interpretive “story-line” for the Park and area’s history, i.e. When was the Village and Town first Settled?; What’s the history behind the Lighthouse and Dam? What were some significant historic happenings in the area, or in the park?; When were the old stone structures built?;
- Consider a “Corporate Sponsorship” program which encourages local Lancaster and Depew businesses to get more involved with Como Lake Park, including sponsoring certain events, restoring older facilities and park features, setting up an interpretive signage program, etc.
- Improve pedestrian safety and visibility along mainroads;
- Enhance fishing access and opportunities along Cayuga Creek through the entire Park. This includes establishing strategically placed fishing platforms on the shores of the newly dredged Como Lake and along the creek. Consider additional recreational opportunities such as paddle boats or canoe uses in the lake.
- Make improvements/upgrades to pedestrian bridge crossings onto the islands to meet ADA guidelines for access.
- Reduce lawn mowing to provide more natural setting in non-use areas, and help to shift park maintenance

towards restoring older park structures.

- *Continue planting additional new native tree plantings throughout the park*
- *Establish a new “Eco-Park” setting in the wooded and meadow areas at the far eastern, undeveloped section of the park, which would follow the guidelines established for “CONSERVATION PARKS.”*
 - *Provide a pedestrian bridge crossing over the Creek*
 - *Establish a unique system of nature trails to view an impressive naturalization area of meadows and young woodlands. This would provide a new recreational and educational opportunity to the residents in the area, and provide enhanced /protected habitat for wildlife.*
 - *Parking would initially be shared with the Bowen Road Picnic Grove.*
 - *Future developments could include a small nature interpretive/educational facility with meeting room.*
 - *New native plantings could be introduced to strengthen perimeter buffers, improve creek shoreline conditions, and enhance wildlife habitat.*
- *Improve playground facilities throughout the park. Remove and replace oldest, non-compliant structures with newer equipment. Consider earthtone colors in the Heritage park setting rather than bright, primary colors*
- *Promote four-seasons recreational opportunities in Como Lake Park, including the sledding hill, skating rink and cross-country ski trails*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES / PARK SPECIFIC ACTIONS

PRIORITY KEY

- S Short Term *(1 - 3 years)*
- M Mid Term *(4 - 10 years)*
- L Long Term *(11 - 20+ years)*
- O Ongoing *(Continuing Efforts each year)*