106 SUCCESS STORY

Public-Private Partnership Results in Economic Development, Preservation

Lake County, Illinois

"Fort Sheridan provided us with a great opportunity to improve public access to the Lake Michigan shoreline, preserve and restore natural habitats for rare species, and interpret the site's exciting military and cultural history."

— ANN B. MAINE,
President, Lake County Forest Preserve District

Photos: Above, commandant's quarters (courtesy Town of Fort Sheridan); Right, First Cavalry rough riding bluffs 1897; Third Cavalry on parade 1925; Nike missiles 1960 (photos courtesy Lake County Forest Preserves' Lake County Discovery Museum)

THE STORY

A permanent Army garrison was established in the Chicago area after two major episodes of civil unrest. The Great Chicago Fire in 1871 left thousands homeless and set off a looting rampage, leading to declaration of martial law. Lieutenant General Philip Sheridan restored order. When labor disputes led to the Haymarket Riots in 1886, civic leaders urged the federal militia to establish a permanent garrison to protect property and lives. Fort Sheridan was established in 1887. Prominent Chicago architects Holabird and Roche designed major components of the fort. Landscape architect Ossian C. Simonds, recognized for his pioneering "prairie style" approach, designed the landscape. The Fort Sheridan Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Due to its architectural, historic, landscape, and cultural significance, the district was designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1984.

THE PROJECT

Fort Sheridan was recommended for closure in the Department of Defense's 1988 Base Realignment and Closure report. In 1989, a coalition of local preservationists and environmental organizations joined with the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois (LPCI) to provide information and support to U.S. Rep. John Porter, who organized a commission that recommended the site be maintained as open space for public use. The commission then transformed into the Fort Sheridan Joint Planning Committee (JPC), which became the local redevelopment authority. After discussions among the Army, Department of Defense, LPCI, the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the ACHP, Rep. Porter's office, and the Illinois Senators' offices, proposed legislation to authorize a land swap to a private developer was dropped.

THE 106 PROCESS

The Army, the federal agency carrying out this project, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are

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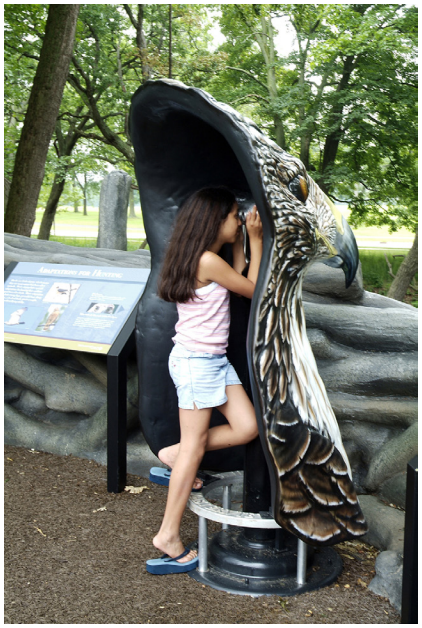

Photos: Above, the beach and Lake Michigan (Photo by Laura Tucker/Collections of Lake County Forest Preserves' Lake County Discovery Museum); Right, young visitor looking through binoculars at the hawk's nest exhibit (courtesy Lake County Forest Preserves)

required to consult with parties that have an interest in the fate of the property when adverse effects are likely to occur. The Army, SHPO, JPC, LPCI, National Park Service, and the ACHP executed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) to conclude the Section 106 process for the base closure and disposal in 1995. The Army committed to ongoing consultation with the SHPO, the ACHP, JPC, and LPCI, and to transfer out of federal ownership historic properties in a manner that would preserve and maintain their overall character. Property was made available to the Lake County Forest Preserve District, and approximately 21 acres within the Historic District were awarded to homeless assistance providers by the Department of Health and Human Services. For the property under JPC's control, the JPC selected a Master Development Team, including the LR Development Company, to develop and implement a renovation and adaptive reuse plan. Additionally, the Army committed to conducting certain studies, recordation, coordination with other property owners, and developing status reports

Consulting Parties:

Army

ACHP

Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer

Fort Sheridan Joint Planning Committee

Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois

National Park Service

THE SUCCESS

Historically significant structures were converted into unique contemporary single family, condominium, and other living spaces, preserving historic features while fulfilling community needs. The 54-acre parade ground was preserved intact, safe from development, for area residents to enjoy. The development company renovated key fort buildings in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and received federal tax incentives for portions of the project. Approximately 274 acres of open space were made available to the Lake County Forest Preserve District which manages them, offers educational tours of the historic fort areas, and provides other public services. Chicago-area residents and visitors gained access to an undeveloped natural Lake Michigan shoreline and nature areas open to them for the first time in a century that include beaches, recreational trails, and habitat for wildlife, including endangered species. Please see www.lcfpd.org/fort_sheridan/?rdct=ExploreTheFort.org to learn more. In short, a 19th century architectural and landscape jewel has been saved and put to vibrant contemporary use. This case serves as a model showcasing a federal agency turning over a sustainable community asset to the public for economic benefit and enjoyment for the future.

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to **www.achp.gov**

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