



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Conservation Design Forum
Contact: Denice Shuty
Marketing Manager
PH. 630.559-2022
dshuty@cdfinc.com

Study and Plan Establishing *Openlands Lakeshore Preserve* Lauded at American Society of Landscape Architects - Illinois Chapter Awards

Elmhurst, IL - A feasibility study and plan by Conservation Design Forum which guided the establishment of the **Openlands Lakeshore Preserve** was recognized with an achievement award from the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (IL-ASLA).

Openlands commissioned the study by **Conservation Design Forum** in 2004 prior to acquiring an obscured 77-acre parcel of **rare and picturesque bluff and ravine habitat** from the U.S. Navy following the decommissioning of **historic Ft. Sheridan**. Out of public view for more than a hundred years, the year-long study by Conservation Design Forum (CDF) confirmed that the land was an ecological treasure; home to **7 threatened or endangered native plant species**, and the last surviving one-mile stretch of authentic Lake Michigan shoreline in Illinois.



Left: Visioning for the restoration and recreational use of rare Lake Michigan shoreline outlined in the study and plan by Conservation Design Forum. Right: Completed site amenities and interpretive signage atop the restored bluffs.

The 78-page study guiding the land acquisition plan and future land use, called the *Fort Sheridan Lakefront Preserve Action Plan* was conducted by CDF's team of recognized authorities in collaborative **planning, ravine ecosystems, site analysis protocols, stormwater engineering, native plants of the Chicago region, and restorative site practices**. A *Floristic Quality Assessment (FQA)* protocol pioneered by CDF founding partner Gerould Wilhelm Ph.D., was performed to provide benchmark data and determine the most beneficial approaches to restoration and preservation.

With the **ecological and cultural study** completed, and an action plan for the **protection and**

long-term stewardship in place, Openlands made the decision to expand its typical conservation role from that of an advisor to that of a land owner. Since taking possession of the land from the Navy, a significant portion of the recommended restoration work has been performed to successfully conserve and enhance the rare bluff-coast habitat as a refuge for wildlife, scientific study, and enjoyment by the public.

"Thoughtfulness and expertise are hugely important when it comes to creating a space that is inviting both to people and to nature, and Conservation Design Forum's plan for the Openlands Lakeshore Preserve provided both," remarked Openlands President and CEO Jerry Adelman. "Openlands has long concerned itself with connecting the citizens of our huge urban region with the nature that surrounds them. This decades-long mission came to fruition at the Preserve, the most important realization of this driving principle. The partnership with and tremendous planning work done by Conservation Design Forum was invaluable in helping the space become a permanent home for an array of plants and animals and an attractive spot to visit both for migrating species and for curious human visitors."

In 2013, the site achieved status as an *Illinois Nature Preserve* by the **Illinois Nature Preserves Commission**, protecting it in perpetuity. In addition to the **recreational paths, overlooks, beach area, outdoor artwork, and rich plant and wildlife**, the Openlands Lakeshore Preserve is now one of 96 registered *StarParks* worldwide - identifying it as a place where the public can enjoy the starry night sky surrounded by other precious gifts of nature.

The **Illinois ASLA** award was presented to Conservation Design Forum at the professional association's annual awards program taking place this year on Friday, April 17, 2015 at Hotel Allegro in Chicago. To see images of the Openlands Lakeshore Preserve, visit the **Conservation Design Forum website** at:
http://www.cdfinc.com/Project?project_id=168

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About Conservation Design Forum

Conservation Design Forum is an award-winning multidisciplinary firm that provides ecologically-based approaches to land-use planning, site/landscape design and civil/water engineering at all levels of public and private development throughout the Great Lakes region. The company is a privately held corporation founded in 1994 with offices in Elmhurst (Chicago), Illinois and Ann Arbor, Michigan. To discuss a project or possible collaboration with CDF, or for more information about their services, go to: www.cdfinc.com or call 630-559-2000.