

LAKE MICHIGAN & CHICAGO LAKEFRONT PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection District regulates development along Chicago's lakefront. Any physical change to property within the district requires review and approval. The repair or rehabilitation exceeding 50% of the total replacement cost of an existing structure also triggers review and approval, as does any proposal to increase the site coverage or height of an existing building, or to alter any structure containing more than three dwelling units.

Purpose and Goals

The Lakefront Protection District Ordinance has 13 specific purposes (Sec. 16-4-030).

1. To promote and protect the health, safety, comfort, convenience, and the general welfare of the people and to conserve the City's natural resources.
2. To identify and divide the district into zones where development is restricted and regulated.
3. To maintain and improve the purity and quality of the waters of Lake Michigan.
4. To insure that construction in the lake or modification of the shoreline will not cause environmental damage or diminish water quality; and to insure fish, birds and other fauna are recognized and supported.
5. To insure that the lakefront is devoted only to public purposes and to expand the quantity and quality of lakefront parks.
6. To promote and provide for continuous pedestrian movement along the shoreline.
7. To promote and provide for pedestrian access to the lakefront at intervals of one-fourth mile and additional places where possible, and to protect and enhance vistas at these locations and where possible.
8. To promote and provide for improved public transportation access to the lakefront.
9. To insure that no roadway of expressway standards shall be permitted.
10. To insure that development of properties adjacent to the lakefront implement the purposes above.
11. To achieve the above-stated purposes through the public acquisition of property.
12. To define and limit the powers and duties of the administrative body and officers as provided herein.
13. Nothing contained in the ordinance shall be deemed to be a waiver or consent for any activity that may be otherwise required by law.

Evaluation Criteria

The Lake Michigan and Chicago Lakefront Protection Ordinance outlines 14 policies by which development along the lakefront is evaluated.

1. Complete the publicly owned and locally controlled park system along the entire lakefront.
2. Maintain and enhance the landscaped, spacious and continuous character of the lakeshore parks.
3. Continue to improve the water quality and ecological balance of Lake Michigan.
4. Preserve the cultural, historical, and recreational heritage of the lakeshore parks.
5. Maintain and improve the formal character and open water vista of Grant Park with no new above-ground structures permitted.
6. Increase the diversity of recreational opportunities while emphasizing lake-oriented leisure activities.
7. Protect and develop natural lakeshore park and water areas for wildlife habitation.
8. Increase personal safety.
9. Design all lake edge and lake construction to prevent detrimental shoreline erosion.
10. Ensure a harmonious relationship between lakeshore parks and community edges but in no instance allow private development east of Lake Shore Drive.
11. Improve access to lakeshore parks and reduce vehicular traffic on secondary park roads.
12. Strengthen the parkway characteristics of Lake Shore Drive.
13. Ensure all port, water supply, and public facilities are designed to enhance lakefront character.
14. Coordinate all public and private development within the water, park, and community zones.

The Lakefront Plan of Chicago, published in 1972, outlined 14 "Basic Policies for the Lakefront of Chicago" and The Lakefront Protection Ordinance of 1973 laid out 13 "Purposes". These have been incorporated into the current Development Manual for Chicago Plan Commission Projects—an informational guide offered as an application resource for developers on the City of Chicago's website. The 14 Basic Policies have been renamed "Evaluation Criteria" and the 13 Purposes have been adapted as "Purposes and Goals".