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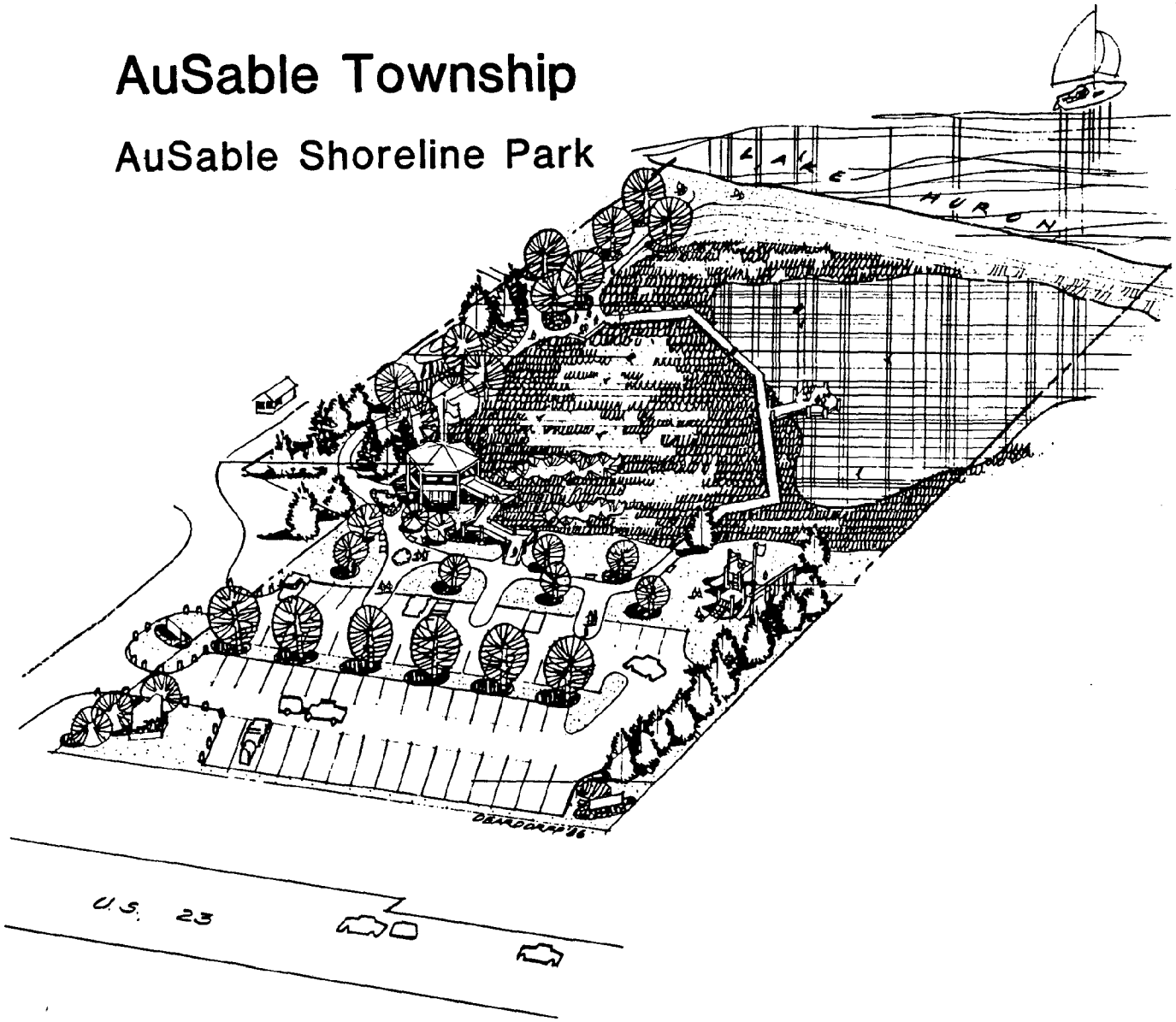
AuSable Township

AuSable Shoreline Park



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Office of Coastal Zone Management
c and Atmospheric Administration

Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc
Engineers • Planners

AuSable Township

AUSABLE SHORELINE PARK

QH91.75.M5A97 1986

September, 1986

Prepared for:

AuSable Township

Prepared by:

Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc.
Engineers - Planners
2330 E. Stadium Blvd.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Administered by:

AuSable Township Recreation Commission
Division of Land Resource Programs
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources

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I

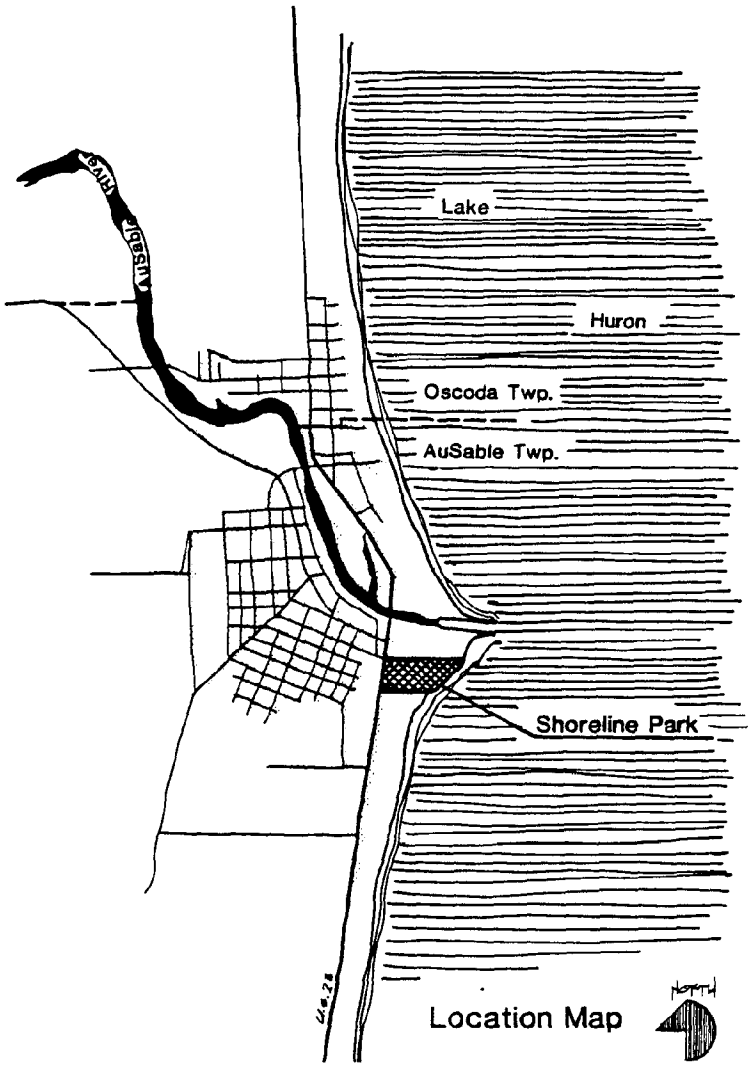
INTRODUCTION

I
INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

In 1986, AuSable Township received funds from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program to conduct a study of the Township's Shoreline Park. The park incorporates approximately 4-1/2 acres of waterfront property located on Lake Huron and borders US-23. Because of this prime location and because of its unique setting on Lake Huron, the park is considered a major recreational facility for the Township (see Location Map).

Over the past few years, gradual improvements have been made to the property. A gravel parking lot was constructed and a picnic area was also completed. The Township now desires to implement further improvements at this facility. However, prior to any further development, it was determined that a master plan for park development is necessary which will propose a long-term, coordinated development scheme.



Location Map

The purpose of this study is to develop a master park development plan which will analyze the coastal area, explore alternative design schemes, develop final site designs, and propose implementation programs.

OBJECTIVES

Given the overall purpose of this study, a detailed set of work objectives can be developed. The objectives are as follows:

- Actively solicit input from the community so that the study and final plan reflect the desires of AuSable Township residents and local officials.
- Analyze coastal features and recommend opportunities for new development.
- Develop new designs for the coastal area which will be beneficial to residents and tourists alike.
- Develop an implementation strategy which will include cost and funding sources for the development of AuSable Shoreline Park.

II

STUDY AREA ANALYSIS

II
STUDY AREA ANALYSIS

Prior to the development of site design and land use recommendations, an inventory and analysis of physical and natural features is important.

NATURAL FEATURES

The predominant natural feature of Shoreline Park is the wetland area. Approximately one-half of the park's 4-1/2 acres consists of marsh and open water. The marsh is an open wetland community that is typically found along lakes and streams. Marshes are dominated by graminoids (grass-like plants). Trees are usually absent, but shrubs may be present at least on the margins. The preliminary vegetation analysis of Shoreline Park's marsh area indicates that various grasses and sedges are dominant. While the marsh vegetation is important for wildlife and fish habitat areas, there are no known rare or endangered plant species. The following plants were found growing in the marsh area:

Table I
Plants Found Within AuSable Township Shoreline Park

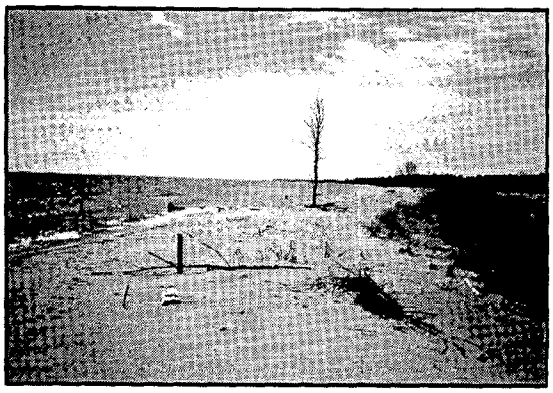
Carex lanuginosa	Wholly Sedge
Carex stricta	Tussock Sedge
Eleocharis sp.	Eleocharis
Calamagrostis canadensis	Blue-Joint Grass
Juncus balticus	Baltic Rush
Typha latifolia	Broad-leaved cat tail
Nuphar variegatum	Yellow Pond Lily

Several woody species were found along the margins of the marsh:

Robinia pseudoacacia	Black Locust
Populus tremuloides	Trembling Aspen
Salix bebbiana	Bebb's Willow
Salix interior	Sandbar Willow
Alnus rugosa	Tag Alder
Cornus stolonifera	Red-Osier Dogwood

The northwest end of the marsh area has been filled in to provide for a picnic area and parking lot. Existing plant species include Red Ash which were recently planted.

The soil conditions of the site range from well-drained where the marsh has been filled, to a raw grassy peat or muck produced by decomposition of the peat. The fringes of the marsh consist primarily of sand.



The shoreline area of the park is approximately 300 ft in length. The width of the shoreline varies considerably with the season. Observations of between 5 ft and 20 ft in width were made at different times of the year. Extending from the shoreline several yards into the water, old piers can be found. These piers present a safety hazard to swimmers and are also not aesthetically pleasing.

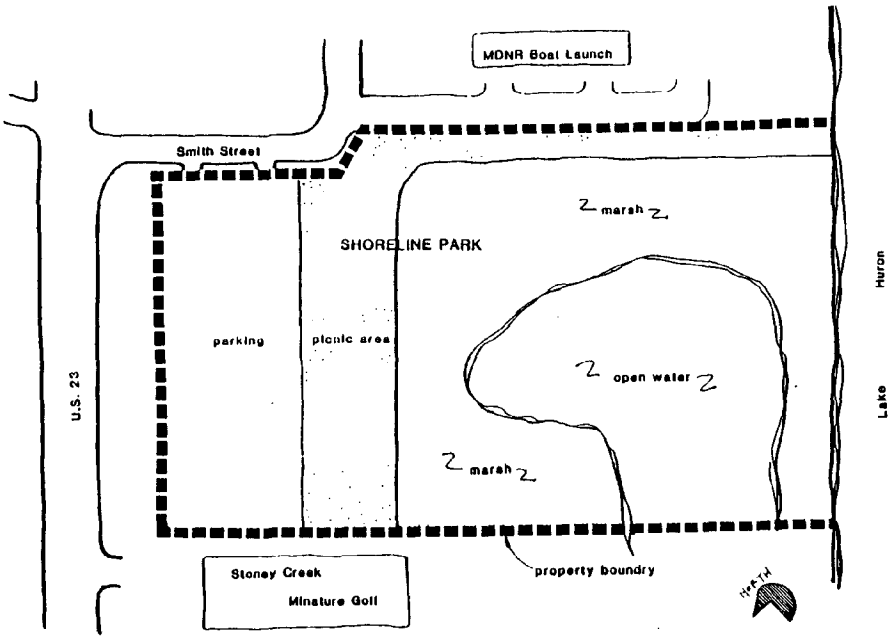
Presently, the marsh area is separated from the shoreline and Lake Huron by a sandy mound extending the length of the marsh. This mound was covered by grasses and willows and appeared stable.

The center of the marsh consists of open water with depths of over 20 ft in spots. Apparently, this area was dredged out in the early 1900s and ships were brought into this site. The depth of this water allows for a substantial fish population. The marsh and open water area provide a unique opportunity for a boardwalk that would allow walking, picnicking, and fishing.

Bird species observed during a visit to the site included mallards, red-winged blackbirds, tree swallows, herring gulls, and a belted-kingfisher. Development and maintenance of this area as a marsh could increase the bird population significantly.

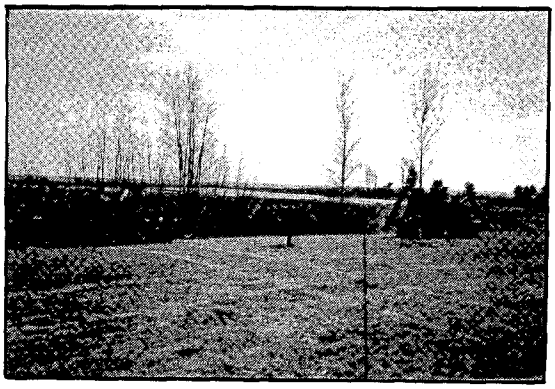
PHYSICAL FEATURES

Shoreline Park is bound on the north by US 23 , to the east by Smith Street and the MDNR boat launch, to the south by Lake Huron, and to the west by a private business (Stoney Creek Miniature Golf). The map below presents an illustration of existing site conditions.



Existing Conditions

Shoreline Park



Initial improvements have begun on the park itself. A portion of the marsh has been filled. This provides a gravel parking area for 70 to 80 cars and a 60 ft wide grass picnic area. Six metal barbeque grills have been added, as well as wood picnic tables. A chain link fence separates the parking from the picnic area and the park from the MDNR boat launch. The name of the park is located on a commercialized sign indicating various organizations and services found in the AuSable/Oscoda area.

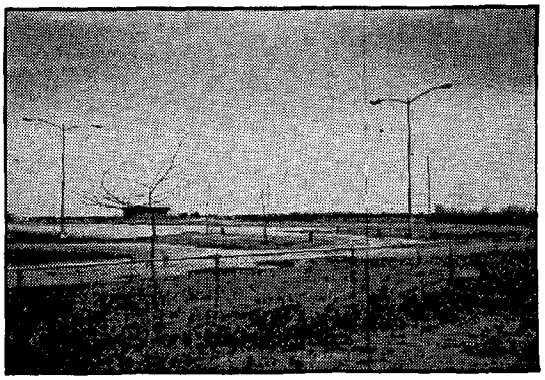
Site Access

US 23 is the main north/south route in the area. It is a two-lane highway with an asphalt surface. In addition to the major arterial, Smith Street is a local street in the study area with an asphalt surface in poor condition. Currently, the poorly functioning intersection of US 23 and Smith Street is confusing and may be dangerous during times of high traffic flow.

The MDOT has plans for improving US 23. Plans in the area of Shoreline Park include a paved deceleration lane south of Smith Street, realignment of Smith Street east with Smith Street west of US 23 and paving of Smith Street with curbs on the radius off of US 23. The drive approaches to the park will also be paved.

Adjacent Land Use

The MDNR boat launch is located to the north of Shoreline Park at the mouth of the AuSable River. It is one of only two public access sites in the Township and is heavily used by both locals and tourists. There is ramp space for 2 or 3 boats onto the AuSable River with direct access to Lake Huron. Negotiations have been initiated by the Township in order to lease the boat launch from the MDNR.



The shoreline area of the MDNR site consists of a wide strip (approximately 300 to 500 ft) of grasses and woody vegetation. This area may provide space for a campground to be run by the Township should the lease be acquired.

A private miniature golf course is located along the south side of the property. A portion of this site is in wetlands and pond area which adjoins the AuSable Shoreline Park.

Utilities

Adjacent to Shoreline Park exists overhead electrical wires and a waterline. Presently, there is no sewer service to the site. The Township hopes to have sewer service to the park in the future.

RECREATION USE PATTERNS

As stated in the AuSable Township Recreation Plan (1985), AuSable Township has already established a good foundation for outdoor recreation. However, the Township parks are for the most part undeveloped.

The recreational needs and demands of AuSable Township are great. Tourism is a major source of income to the Township and by providing tourists with quality outdoor recreation opportunities can only encourage their return. The main tourist attractions include camping, swimming, hiking, biking, x-crossing skiing, horseback riding, boating, and fishing. The development of parks and areas to accommodate these tourists is essential.

Tourism is not the only reason for development of the parklands in AuSable Township. The residents of the area must be considered with equal importance. Providing recreational facilities close to the residential population is important in maintaining Township identity.

The Wetlands Protection Act (Act 203) refers to the worth of wetlands as a resource. Of main importance is the issue of public access to Lake Huron. With public access to the lake so difficult to find, the necessity of developing a site such as Shoreline Park cannot be overstated. The park can provide many recreational opportunities to tourists and residents alike. These opportunities would include such activities as picnicking, swimming, fishing, birdwatching, and natural history interpretation. Another important facet is the carry-over aspect from the MDNR boat launch. The boat launch itself provides boating and fishing access to Lake Huron. However, boaters and fishermen currently have no place to relax and picnic other than in their boats or in their vehicles. Shoreline Park could provide fishermen and boaters with space for these activities. Picnicking, swimming, children's play, and educational opportunities are only a few of the aspects Shoreline Park could incorporate.

The park will provide an adequate day-use area for the MDNR boat launch and local residents. It also has high visibility from US 23 and may be the destination of many tourists, as well as a pleasant surprise to others.

The importance of public access to coastal lands is a major reason for the development of Shoreline Park. The park combined with the MDNR boat launch could

provide the area with an essential access site fulfilling many recreational needs. It will also protect and manage valuable marsh areas which are important for wildlife habitat.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

- The park areas of AuSable Township are largely undeveloped. Development of these areas would fulfill a need of residents and tourists alike.

- The Wetlands Protection Act (Act 203) states that wetlands are a valuable resource worthy of protection. The park marsh areas can be protected and managed as an important recreation resource with boardwalks, fishing, and interpretive displays.

- Public access to the Great Lakes and surrounding wetlands is diminishing. Maintaining access to these resources is critical. Shoreline Park offers this opportunity.

- The marsh area provides a unique opportunity for a boardwalk that would allow walking, picnicking, bird watching, and natural history interpretation.

- The relatively deep waters found in the center of the marsh area are of historical significance relating to the boating industry in Michigan.

- A portion of the site has been filled to provide adequate parking and picnicking areas.

- The MDNR boat launch adjacent to Shoreline Park is a compatible land use and, should the Township acquire the lease, would provide a large recreation site at the mouth of the AuSable River.

- The heavy use of the MDNR boat launch combined with the lack of picnic and day use facilities in the area creates a need for improving and expanding the facilities at Shoreline Park.

- Appropriate entry signage is needed to call attention to the park and guide users to the entrance.

- The Smith Street entry to shoreline Park is currently in poor condition, however, MDOT has plans for improving this street.

- With appropriate clean-up, the beach area would provide an important site for swimming and other day-use activities.

III

SHORELINE PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

III

SHORELINE PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

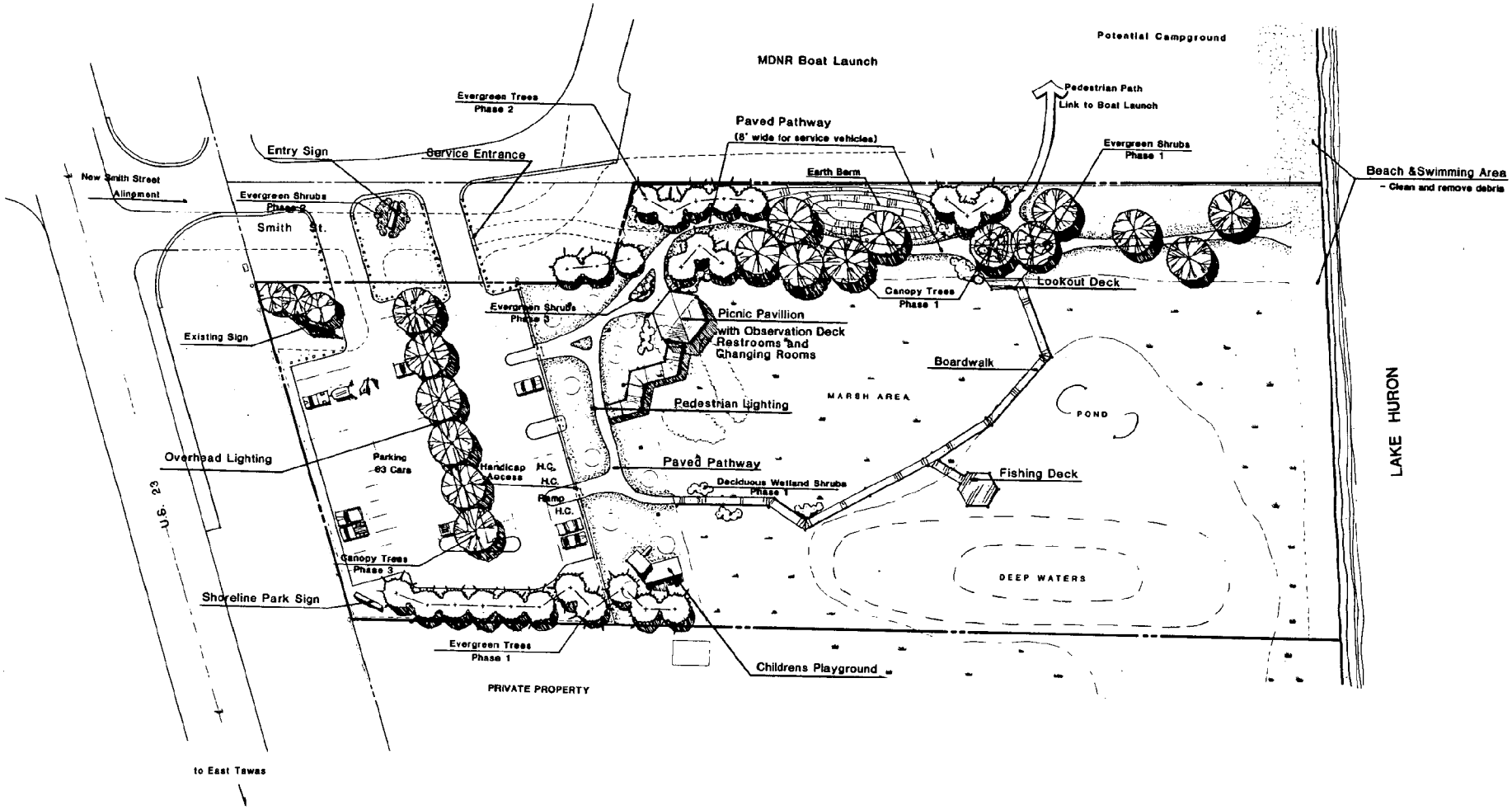
An aerial sketch and master plan of the proposed Shoreline Park are presented in the following pages. The Development Plan of Shoreline Park is based on three ideas:

1) Enhancing the partially developed picnic facilities;
2) Making use of the wetland areas in a compatible manner; and
3) Promoting access to Lake Huron and providing shoreline recreation.

An important goal of the Development Plan is to enhance the picnic facilities at the park. Currently, the Township has placed picnic tables and barbecue grills on a filled portion of the site and landscaped with trees. The plan calls for the installation of a combined picnic pavillion/restroom facility and changing room bordering on the marsh area. This pavillion would accommodate 4 or 5 picnic tables for group picnics, as well as provide protection from the sun and the rain. Single tables would still be available for single parties. An observation deck could also be constructed on top of the shelter to provide views of the marsh and lake area. The observation deck and all facilities will be accessible to the handicapped.

A children's play area would also be built to provide activities for the younger age group. This would include swings, slides, and climbing structures, separate from the picnic area. Landscaping of the park is also proposed. This includes development of an evergreen screen along the south parking lot boundary and selected plantings throughout the park. A detailed listing of proposed plantings is listed in the appendix.

Another main concept during development of the park is to utilize the wetlands in an appropriate manner. The wetland area comprises almost one-half of the site and is an interesting and educational recreation opportunity. The open water area



AuSable Township
Shoreline Park

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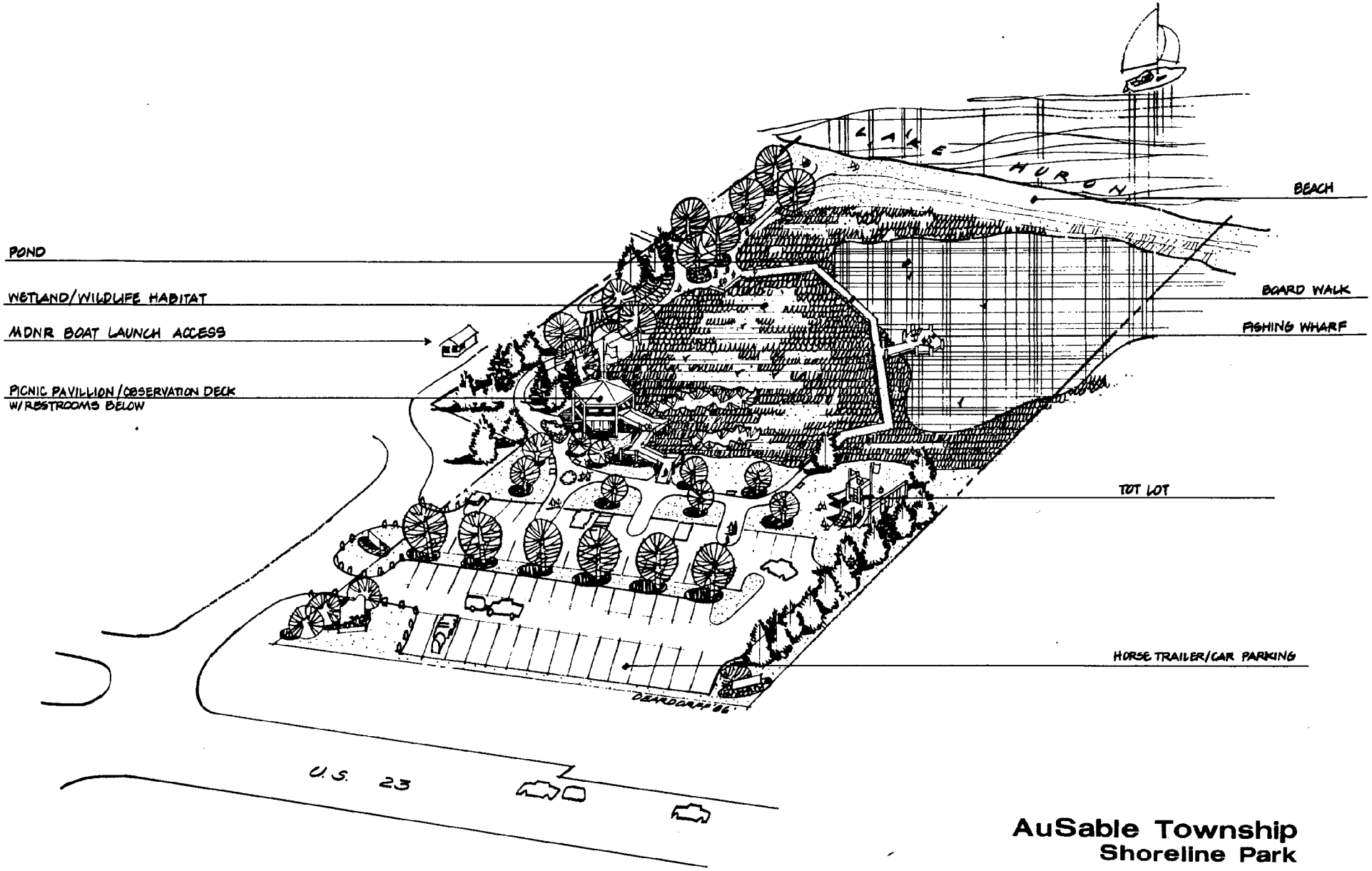
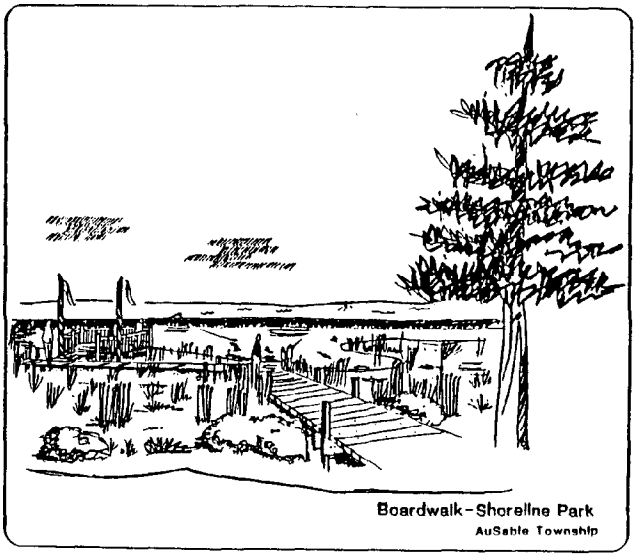


AuSable Township
Shoreline Park

AYRES, LEWIS, NORRIS AND MAY, INC.
engineers planners

within to the wetland also contains a sizable fish population. The fishing is good in these waters but currently is unaccessible without a boat. The plan proposes the construction of a boardwalk that would allow people to walk through the wetlands to the open water area. A deck located near the open water would create space for fishermen without disturbing circulation on the boardwalk. The boardwalk would also allow excellent bird watching and natural history interpretive opportunities. Signs could be located along the boardwalk detailing the importance of marsh and wetland areas in Great Lakes ecology. Common birds, fish, and plants could be identified, as well as information on historical events of the area such as ship building and lumbering. The boardwalk would be useful in utilizing the entire site, as well as its ecological resources.

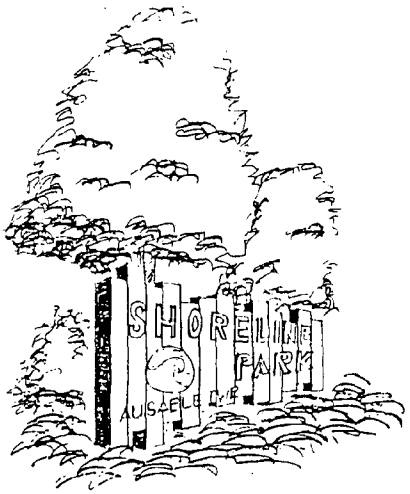

Boardwalk-Shoreline Park
AuSable Township

A third goal in the development plan is to promote access to Lake Huron and encourage shoreline recreation. The existing 66 ft wide road right-of-way provides space for a trail leading to the lake. The trail would be landscaped and lighted in an interesting manner to attract pedestrian traffic to the lake. Interpretive signs could be utilized along the trail as well. Cleaning of the beach and removal of the old piers in the lake would allow use of the shoreline area. Swimming and picnicking would be some of the activities taking place on the beach.

Another reason for development of the trail to the beach would be events held by the Michigan Trail Riders. Once a year, they ride horseback from Lake Michigan to Lake Huron and Shoreline Park is their destination on the eastern end. This could become quite a festive event as people come to watch the riders end their long trek at the lake.

Some other aspects of the Development Plan include such items as landcaping and signage. Landscaping is important to guide people's views and movements, to define boundaries, and to screen unsightly areas. Landscaping at Shoreline Park would be used in these ways. Plantings along the trail would define the trail limits and guide people to the lake. Naturalistic plantings in the marsh area would enhance the species growing there now. Presently, the miniature golf course to the south dominates the view. This boundary is in need of definition and screening would block out the unsightly golf course.

Signage should receive special attention. The use and importance of interpretive signs has already been mentioned. More important, there is a need for entry signs to the park. The existing sign is unattractive, cluttered, and does not appear to identify or call attention to the park. New signage along US 23, as well as the Smith Street entrance would bring notice to Shoreline Park and draw people into the area.



Entry Sign-Shoreline Park
AuSable Township

The development of Shoreline Park can tie together many opportunities creating a favorable area for tourists and residents. The combination of Shoreline Park with the MDNR boat launch provides a large public access site to Lake Huron that is extremely valuable. It would also encourage tourism and day use in the area and finally, development of the park would help meet a need for facilities close to the residential population center.

IV

IMPLEMENTATION

IV
IMPLEMENTATION

The AuSable Township Shoreline Park Plan must be accompanied by implementation programs which will provide the Township with guidance toward actual construction.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT COSTS AND PHASING

It is unrealistic to think that all of the proposed improvements can be completed within a short period of time. Rather, the plan is intended to be implemented in phases over a period of five years. The chart on the following page (Table II) illustrates estimated cost and phasing priorities of specific projects associated with the area designed plans. Project priorities are divided into short- and long-term phases.

Phase I incorporates development of a picnic pavillion, boardwalk, asphalt pathways, and miscellaneous site improvements. Phase II incorporates an observation deck, fishing dock, lighting facilities, and further site improvements. The final phase, Phase III, will include asphalt paving of the parking lot, restrooms, landscaping, and beach clean-up. A plant materials list for each phase of development has been included in the appendix.

FUNDING

The cost of implementation will place added importance upon outside grants and assistance programs. However, it is likely that local funds will also be necessary for a significant portion of the project cost. AuSable Township should monitor the status of Federal and State funding programs and aggressively pursue funds if and when they become available.

Table II
AuSable Township Shoreline Park
Preliminary Cost Estimate and Phasing

Description	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Phase I:			
Picnic Pavillion	---	---	$16,000
Boardwalk	1675 sft	$5.50/sft	9,213
Asphalt Pathways	990 lft	$8.00/lft	7,920
Grading & Seeding	2100 syd	$.50/syd	1,050
Tree & Shrub Planting	---	---	5,000
Park Sign (U.S. 23)	---	---	817
			$40,000
Phase II:			
Observation Deck & Ramp	---	---	$12,000
Fishing Dock	784/sft	$5.50/sft	4,312
Lighting, Parking Lot	3 ea	$1000/ea	3,000
Lighting, Pathway	7 ea	$1000/ea	7,000
Playground	Lump Sum	---	4,000
Tree & Shrub Planting	---	---	3,000
Entry Sign (Smith Street)	---	---	800
Interpretive Signs	---	---	1,200
Parking Control Bollards	70/ea	$15/ea	1,050
			$36,362
Phase III:			
Asphalt Paving (parking lot)	360/ton	$35/ton	$12,600
Restrooms	---	---	50,000
Landscaping	---	---	3,000
Beach Clean-Up	---	---	4,000
			$69,600

At the current time, a number of funding programs are in place, although their long-term future is unknown. The following funding programs currently have funds available for the improvement projects proposed by this plan:

- Coastal Zone Management Program, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
- Natural Resources Trust Fund, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
- Land & Water Conservation Fund, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources/U.S. Interior Department
- Waterways Division, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
- Miscellaneous

In addition to the programs named above, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Michigan Department of Transportation operate certain programs designed to meet specific site development projects.

The potential availability of grant funds does not eliminate the necessity to finance all or a portion of the project with local funds. It is the rule rather than the exception that Federal grants require the local unit of government to fund a portion of the project. Local funding can be raised through the general fund, revenue sharing, general obligation bonds, and private contribution.

APPENDIX

LANDSCAPE MATERIALS TO BE USED IN EACH PHASE

Plant Species	Quantity	Spacing	Minimum Size
PHASE I			
Trees:			
PINUS NIGRA AUSTRIAN PINE	11	15' o.c.	5' high
BETULA NIGRA RIVER BIRCH	3	15' o.c.	1" to 1-1/2" cal. clump
ACER RUBRUM RED SUNSET MAPLE	7	30' o.c.	1-3/4" to 2" cal.
Deciduous Shrubs:			
Any combination of the following to total 24 deciduous shrubs	24 plants		
SAMBUCUS CANADENSIS AMERICAN ELDER		15' o.c.	4' high
CORNUS BAILEYI RED TWIGGED DOGWOOD		6'-8' o.c.	3' high
VIBURNUM DENTATUM ARROWWOOD		6' o.c.	4' high
SYMPHORICARPOS ALBUS WHITE SNOWBERRY		4' o.c.	3' high
Evergreen Shrubs:			
JUNIPERUS C. 'SEAGREEN' SEA GREEN JUNIPER	9	5' o.c.	24"
JUNIPERUS C. 'GOLD COAST' GOLD TIP JUNIPER	9	5' o.c.	24"
PHASE 2			
Trees:			
PINUS NIGRA AUSTRIAN PINE	5	15' o.c.	5' high
PICEA PUNGENS GLAUCA COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE	6	15' o.c.	6' high
PINUS SYLVESTRIS SCOTCH PINE	3	18' o.c.	6' high

Deciduous Shrubs:

Any combination of the following to total 24 deciduous shrubs	24 plants		
SAMBUCUS CANADENSIS AMERICAN ELDER		15' o.c.	4' high
CORNUS BAILEYI RED TWIGGED DOGWOOD		6'-8' o.c.	3' high
VIBURNUM DENTATUM ARROWWOOD		6' o.c.	4' high
SYMPHORICARPOS ALBUS WHITE SNOWBERRY		4' o.c.	3' high

Evergreen Shrubs:

JUNIPERUS C. 'ARMSTRONGII' ARMSTRONG JUNIPER (entry sign plantings)	18	4' o.c.	24"

PHASE 3

Trees:

TILIA CORDATA LITTLELEAF LINDEN	6	30' o.c.	1-3/4" to 2" cal.
MALUS 'ROBINSON'	3	15' o.c.	1" to 1-1/2" cal.

Deciduous Shrubs:

Any combination of the following to total 15 deciduous shrubs	15 plants		
SAMBUCUS CANADENSIS AMERICAN ELDER		15' o.c.	4' high
CORNUS BAILEYI RED TWIGGED DOGWOOD		6'-8' o.c.	3' high
VIBURNUM DENTATUM ARROWWOOD		6' o.c.	4' high
SYMPHORICARPOS ALBUS WHITE SNOWBERRY		4' o.c.	3' high

Evergreen Shrubs:

JUNIPERUS C. 'ARMSTRONGII' ARMSTRONG JUNIPER	9	4' o.c.	24"
JUNIPERUS C. 'SEA GREEN' SEA GREEN JUNIPER	9	5' o.c.	24"

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