

Onondaga Lake Beach Feasibility Study and Design

Public Meeting #1: Summary and Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

MEETING DETAILS

Date and Location

Tuesday, January 29, 2019, 5–7pm
 Destiny USA SkyDeck (6th floor), 9090 Destiny USA Dr., Syracuse, NY 13204

Attendance

- 54 attendees (scanned sign-in sheets attached)
- ~35 people in audience for presentation (not counting staff/presenters)

Agenda & Format

5:30-6pm: Formal presentation (see separate PowerPoint presentation file)
 5-5:30 and 6-7pm: Informal Q+A sessions with project team and agency experts at 3 topic tables: (1) Beach location and amenities, (2) Swimming safety, and (3) Economic considerations.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Public input was gathered via comment cards submitted at each topic table (responding to questions posed below) as well as a general comment box, and also captured by note takers at each table. This information, presented below, is in addition to the online public opinion survey conducted as part of the Economic/Market Analysis.

<i>Topic: General Questions or Comments</i>	
Comment/Question	Response
How will you maintain the quality of life for local residents? A beach should significantly increase quality of life, but may be complicated by an influx of tourists.	The Feasibility Study (FS) will recommend a “best fit” option for the current Parks layout and adjacent communities. Public opinion will be considered, including options from the communities that a potential beach would serve. The Economic/Market Analysis will help us better understand what percentage of the public currently travels to a public bathing beach facility, where the public travels for a beach, and how likely they are to use a public bathing beach on Onondaga Lake. We anticipate quality of life considerations and desire, which have been included in the Economic/Market Analysis to be folded into the FS.
<i>Topic: Beach Location and Amenities</i>	
Comment/Question	Response
Three comments indicated that Willow Bay is a preferred location for a beach.	The Willow Bay area will be assessed in the FS and included as a potential alternative.
I don’t feel a beach on Onondaga Lake in any location is a good idea.	Multiple studies, including the FOCUS on Onondaga Lake 2012 Report and the Onondaga Lake Partnership Reconnecting with Onondaga Lake 2007 Report, have cited public interest in a swimming beach on the shores of Onondaga Lake. Improved water quality, swimming, walking trails, weed control and consumable fish were the most desired conditions among people who have visited Onondaga Lake or the Park. During the FS process, we will listen to the public on what they truly want from this lake and help people understand where the lake stands today in terms of water quality and swimmability. The FS will focus on whether a beach is possible, not whether it will be constructed.
How about a splash pad instead of a beach? Near the Wegmans playground.	The beach is under consideration because it was included in the Onondaga County Parks Capital Improvement Plan in 2016. Depending on the outcome of the study, other options could be considered.

Will there be a buffer from I-90?	Potential noise issues will be assessed and addressed in the FS. The general areas of the park being evaluated for a beach are already open to other recreational use. It is not anticipated that any noise from the Thruway would have a significant impact on the citing or operation of the beach on the eastern portion of Onondaga. Noise from the Thruway is currently buffered by tree cover, and it may be recommended that this buffer is maintained or enhanced within the FS design.
What changes to parking will be made?	Parking considerations will be considered in the FS design study, as will operations and maintenance considerations relevant to the Onondaga County Parks Department.
What changes in public transportation will be made? More bus route stops? Trolleys, shuttles?	We are considering enhanced transportation options to and from Onondaga Lake Park to provide City residents with an easier route to these recreational locations. When the Loop the Lake trail is completed, we hope to see the trail used to connect people via pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
Will there be lifeguards?	Yes.
What amenities will be included? Outdoor showers, restrooms, bath house, etc.?	These amenities will be considered in the FS along with cost estimates of each of the amenities.
I would like to see old-fashioned shelters and modern amenities blended.	The FS will include design considerations in the final document.
Would like to see picnic areas with permanent grills and tables.	Onondaga Lake Park currently maintains grills and picnic tables, and the FS will include any necessary additions.
There should be food for sale, food trucks, drink stands, and privately owned shops.	These considerations may be included in the FS, or considered if future construction is undertaken.
Other specific amenities mentioned: Boardwalk (x2); seasonal festivals; “e.g., Ocean City, MD; San Juan, PR”; small education center; beach volleyball; rentals (sports, athletic, water); amusements/entertainment; fireworks; historical value; and better existing facilities.	These considerations largely rely on whether a beach is approved for construction.
How would flooding be handled after heavy rain events? Willow Bay area typically is under water after heavy rains during summer.	Flooding concerns currently present in Onondaga Lake Park will be considered during the FS.
What is the infrastructure plan for each beach location?	The FS and final design for the recommended beach option will address infrastructure.

Topic: Swimming Safety & Public Health

Comment/Question	Response
How will we end the stigma that the lake is too polluted? Future generations need to be informed in ways that are more exciting.	One outcome goal of this process will be to inform us that a larger public outreach campaign is necessary to end the stigma of Onondaga Lake.
Swimming — since the 1950s every 10 years swimming was promised. This is the 21st century, not for me any longer. But anxious to see options available.	Dramatic improvements in water quality due to Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades and remediation by Honeywell have allowed Onondaga Lake to be designated as safe for swimming by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.
I am concerned about the impact of the beach on the lake in terms of litter, sunscreen, etc. Signage might help to avoid issues.	The Project Team is working with Onondaga County Parks to address issues of operations and maintenance, including litter and goose waste.

Why is the EPA involved, and why is “change of use” part of this decision?	<p>The EPA is involved because Onondaga Lake is a Superfund site. EPA and NYSDEC guidelines and approvals have been necessary throughout the cleanup process to record water quality data and to guide the standards used for the Lake Bottom cleanup.</p> <p>‘Change of use’ is necessary by New York State regulations based on the intended use of the water body. This change of use will re-designate the selected shoreline area to align with the proposed use as a public beach and recreational area.</p>
Will the survey and public comment results be available for others to see?	Yes, both will be along with a FAQ about the lake on the website . Survey results will likely be presented at the next public meeting in June.
Beach in the Class B waters might cause people to misunderstand and think that they can also swim in the Class C portion of the lake.	The vast majority of Class C waters at the south end of the lake lack shoreline access. However, if someone were to jump off a boat in this area, sampling suggests the water quality would be appropriate for swimming. Public swimming is currently restricted from shore because of the lack of a public swimming beach.
Concerned about whether there is adequate testing in tributaries near the proposed beach areas. Commented “There are superfund sites all around the lake.” Asked about Sawmill Creek, specifically.	For all Superfund subsites around the lake, there has been testing and reporting on water quality and sediment data. Each of these tributaries was evaluated to determine if they were a source of contamination to the lake. More information is available here https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8668.html and here http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/37558.html
Topic: Economic Considerations	
Comment/Question	Response
How many full-time jobs? Part-time? Seasonal? Build per private? Housing developments bid?	These comments will be addressed as part of the FS. We anticipate seasonal lifeguard positions and some additional Onondaga County Parks positions to cover operations and maintenance. No housing developments will be considered within Onondaga County Parks boundaries.
Total cost of recreation? E.g., Sylvan Beach is free admission with \$10 parking.	There will not be a fee for using the beach.
Keep in mind who’s giving (local residents) vs. who’s receiving. Hopefully also local residents and local bus, tourism, etc. Hope for the best.	We consider local residents to include the City of Syracuse. Following the completion of the Loop the Lake trail, city residents will have access to any potential future beach through the multi-use trail.
What is the economic impact of each beach location on the Village of Liverpool?	We will understand this better after the Economic/Market Analysis is completed.
The greens on the pie charts are too similar – we need contrasting greens to help distinguish.	This has been noted and will be addressed as part of future presentations.
Are results from the survey available yet?	Survey results will likely be released at the June meeting.
How many people have taken the survey?	~2,060
Have you taken potential increases in traffic into consideration? If the beach is a success, how will that impact traffic?	Potential traffic impacts will be evaluated in the FS. However, we do not anticipate traffic to be much heavier than it is currently. Most of the populations not served by a local beach will have access via the pedestrian access and bus routes as well.
Would the beach disrupt normal on-street parking availability? This may not be conducive to the way that parking is set up right now.	Parking will be addressed as part of the FS.

<p>Have the Village residents spoken up at all? About the beach?</p>	<p>Yes. Residents in the Village of Liverpool have completed the online survey as have many others within the area. In addition, the Project Advisory Committee includes Village of Liverpool representatives.</p>
<p>Is there any chance that the parkway would be closed to traffic? Would the parkway be part of the park? Instead of a traffic cut through?</p>	<p>Onondaga Lake Parkway is a State Highway (Route 370) and any decisions regarding the future of this road would be subject to public review and traffic study. Currently, NYSDOT is considering safety improvements to the highway to address the high rate of vehicle accidents and fatalities on the road. Additional information on this project can be located by contacting the NYSDOT regional office. However, no alternatives that would close traffic on Route 370 have been explored and are not likely to be considered due to traffic volumes on that road.</p>
<p>Has the County done any economic impact studies? What is the larger impact of bringing more folks into the area?</p>	<p>As part of this project, we are completing an Economic/Market Analysis to understand the economic impacts of a beach. The FS will also evaluate potential impacts of increased traffic.</p>
<p>When will the decision be made?</p>	<p>We are bringing information together in this study – not advocating for one decision over another. The intention of the FS is to gather information about whether people want beach and what the potential impacts could be. We will have all the information necessary for the lawmakers and the Onondaga County Executive to decide on whether a beach will be constructed. All of the information needed to move ahead with construction will be compiled as part of the FS and design, but the exact timing of any decision is yet to be determined.</p>
<p>Are people asking about restaurants and potential impacts on businesses?</p>	<p>Yes. The Economic/Market Analysis will evaluate the potential impacts on businesses.</p>
<p>How long will the survey be up?</p>	<p>It was available between January 15 and January 31.</p>

In addition to questions and responses noted above, the following comments were submitted:

- We are taking this lake from a shame to something to be proud of.
- We need any reason possible for young people to stay in Syracuse.
- There is a stigma about the lake being too polluted, but maybe a younger generation will not have this.
- Should promote fishing as well as swimming (in general on Onondaga Lake, e.g., fishing derby).