

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: JEFF MUCK, PRCS DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: 329 ELM CT / SHAWOOD LAKE ISLAND
DATE: JANUARY 5, 2026

On August 25, 2025, City Council directed the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS) Commission to "provide plan options for Shawood Lake and the island for City Council to discuss during the initial budget planning meeting in February 2026."

At the December 18, 2025 PRCS Commission meeting, commissioners reviewed the history of the property, discussed challenges associated with developing the island and/or access to Shawood Lake, and evaluated potential future options in response to Council's direction. The presentation that served as the basis for the Commission's discussion is included with this memo.

The 5.43-acre island property was acquired in 2025 through a Council-initiated action at a cost of \$210,000. The Pavilion Shore Conservancy contributed \$17,500 to the purchase which included a grant of \$8,750 from the Novi Parks Foundation.

The Commission identified and discussed several challenges related to developing the island as a park property, including:

- Limited water and sewer access
- Significant aquatic vegetation surrounding the island and along Lakeshore Park
- Location within a floodplain
- ADA accessibility requirements
- Shallow lake depth (estimated at approximately six feet)
- The equalization canal and access to Walled Lake
- Lack of parking and pedestrian access via Elm Court
- Condition and status of the bridge to the island
- Potential human impacts on the lake ecosystem
- Migratory bird nesting areas and patterns
- Public safety considerations
- The impact of adding amenities to an already heavily used Lakeshore Park during peak summer months

Commissioners were also informed of discussions with EGLE (Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) regarding historical vegetation patterns in Shawood Lake. EGLE advised against any alteration of the lake through bioaugmentation efforts such as dredging, aquatic vegetation removal, or chemical treatments. Instead, EGLE encouraged educational outreach to residents about the

wetland complex and lake ecology, as well as the promotion of passive recreation opportunities such as birdwatching and kayaking.

Funding and budget considerations were also discussed, including the potential need for consultants and contractors to prepare studies, plans, and environmental assessments related to any proposed projects or lake impacts.

In addition, the Commission discussed the relative priority of Shawood Lake compared to other park projects, including the ITC Community Sports Park, indoor recreation facility needs, paving the Bosco Fields parking lot, and renovations to the Wildlife Woods fields in light of the anticipated loss of the Suburban/Grand River soccer fields due to the City West project.

Future options for the island, Shawood Lake, and/or Lakeshore Park that were discussed included:

- A passive park featuring pathways, benches, and interpretive signage
- Scenic overlook(s)
- A canoe/kayak launch at Lakeshore Park
- A boardwalk connection between the island and Lakeshore Park
- An osprey nesting platform
- Designation as a nature preserve

Based on these discussions, the PRCS Commission developed the following recommendations for City Council:

1. Maintain the island and lake as a nature preserve in the short term.
2. Prioritize currently scheduled park CIP projects (ITC Community Sports Park redevelopment, Bosco Fields parking lot paving, and Wildlife Woods field renovations) over Shawood Lake-related improvements due to their broader benefit and impact on residents.
3. Consider a future boardwalk connection between Lakeshore Park and the island, scenic overlook(s), and/or an osprey nesting platform.
4. A canoe/kayak launch is not supported by the Commission and should not be a future planning priority.
5. An allocation of \$75,000 or more for consultant services is not recommended at this time, as those funds would be better directed toward existing or future CIP projects.

The motion to approve these recommendations passed unanimously (6–0).

Commissioners commented that the property is a unique and beautiful asset with significant potential but also presents substantial challenges that would need to be addressed.

Currently, demolition of the existing building on the property is still in progress. Delays related to coordination between a utility company and the contractor are expected to be resolved soon. Additionally, an issue has arisen during the abatement process, and City staff are actively working with multiple parties to resolve it as quickly as possible so demolition work may proceed.