

lebanon hills regional park boathouse & accessibility improvements

Lebanon Hills Regional Park – Dakota County, MN

category

Small Budget / Big Impact

abstract

Dakota County sought to improve its watercraft rental operation at Lebanon Hills Regional Park and provide accessibility enhancements for equal access. The existing setup lacked safe working conditions for staff, accessibility for users, and efficiency of operations.

The Landscape Architects worked with county staff to first understand the rental system's needs and operational processes. They then developed plans for more efficient circulation, ADA accessibility ramps and a watercraft launch, a custom-designed Boathouse to safely store the watercraft fleet, a ramp linking the new boathouse and beach, seating, and an expanded sand blanket for launching operations.

narrative

The Lebanon Hills Regional Park Boathouse and Accessibility Improvements project seamlessly integrate a new boathouse into its natural surroundings while addressing the functional requirements and aesthetics of the facility.

The project challenge was to enhance access to Schulze Lake and improve the existing rental operation's efficiency, a signature feature of the park's recreational offerings. The rental watercraft boathouse provides secure storage for rental equipment, and convenient and safe staff access to facilitate the county's rental operations. Collaboration with county stakeholders was paramount throughout the design process, allowing the landscape architects to conduct an analysis of watercraft storage needs, understand challenges to the existing system, and align the design accordingly. This relationship led to a boathouse facility design that met the county's operational requirements and safeguarded the well-being of its staff members.

The landscape architect, working independently, designed the boathouse to blend seamlessly with the surrounding wooded shoreline, prioritizing minimal disruption to the existing trees. Richlite phenolic panels and thermally modified ash were selected as sustainable construction materials by the landscape architect. Additionally, a standing seam metal roof and cedar framing were utilized to ensure long-term durability. These material choices allow the boathouse to harmonize with its natural environment while emphasizing longevity and environmental stewardship.

Recognizing the importance of universal access to the water, an ADA-compliant ramp, gangway, and kayak launch were integrated with a queuing area near the boathouse. The gangway leads to a floating kayak launch, allowing users with mobility challenges the opportunity to transfer from a wheelchair into a kayak for equal access to the water. Placing inclusivity at the project's core, these interventions dissolve barriers, ensuring unobstructed enjoyment of the park's waterfront offerings.

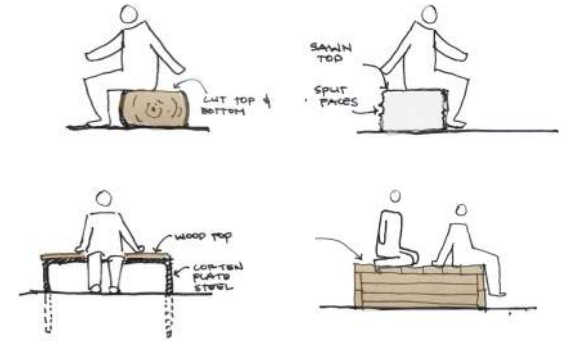
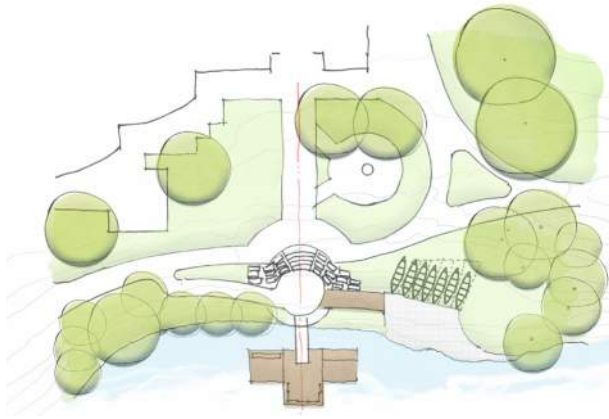
The landscape architect's design creatively addressed the need for accessible gathering spaces along the waterfront. The project introduced areas near the water for people to gather, encouraging socializing and enjoying the natural surroundings. Additionally, by including a queuing area next to the boathouse, visitors have a comfortable space to wait before participating in water activities.

The project addressed circulation of the watercraft area in the context of park operations. To maximize efficiency, a new stair was introduced linking the rental office to the boathouse. The beach area was enlarged, significantly streamlining the watercraft queuing and rental process. An area prone to erosion, the hillside adjacent to the watercraft center was established as a vibrant pollinator prairie installation.

This project successfully integrated a new watercraft storage facility and ADA accessibility into a much-loved regional park. The thoughtful design of the structure and water access system seamlessly blends into the natural environment, meets sustainability and access goals, and will serve park staff for many years. This small-budget project illustrates the care, collaboration, and dedication of the landscape architect to serve this public client.

study

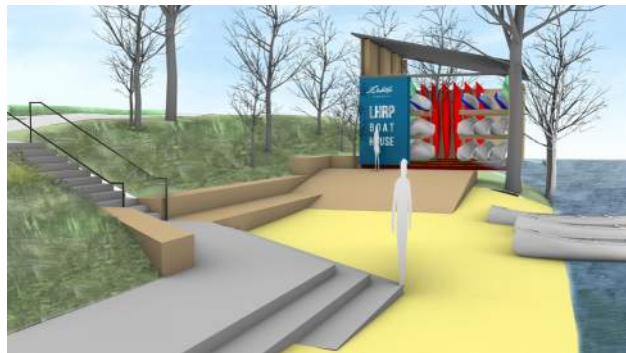
A group gathering area for pre and post rental activities turned the boat launch into a much-needed social space.



form + site study 1



form + site study 2



design solution



The boathouse siting and form aimed to meet the needs of the client and naturally integrate into the site as if it has inhabited the woodland for years.

plan





restored native shoreline

accessible pathway

enhanced connections

group gathering area

expanded beach

before



Storage racks were difficult for staff to use and water access was not accessible.

after



The beach area was enlarged, significantly streamlining rental process.



Existing accessible walk was in disrepair and shoreline was overgrown.



New accessible walk and stair maximized connection of rental office and boathouse.



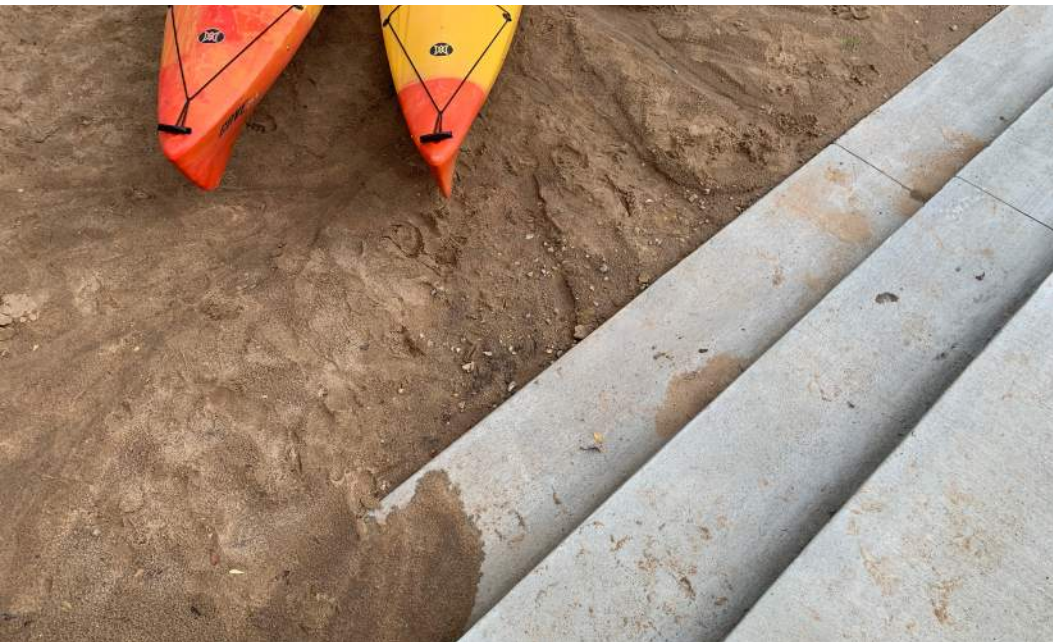
The beach area was enlarged, significantly streamlining rental processes.



Group Gathering & Rental Staging Area



The project was designed to blend into the surrounding woodland and not visually overpower the park setting.



Material choices enabled the park amenities to blend in with the natural setting while emphasizing longevity and environmental stewardship.





Accessible watercraft launch & gangway provide an equitable access to park experiences. The gangway alignment creates an important connection to the rental offices.



Restored Embankment With Wildflowers In Bloom