



# Near-Lake Village Footpaths



**FOX POINT** is a great place to walk in large part because of our well-maintained roads and footpaths. The trunk line is the paved path along the west side of Lake Drive, beginning at School Road and continuing north to the village boundary just north of Dean Road, through Bayside up to and west along the southern edge of Brown Deer Road to Port Washington Road.

## Let's start from the north and move south.

Doctors Park is accessed from Dean Road with the southern portion of the park in Fox Point. The park has many paths and walkways, some of which wind down to the lake. The Friends of Doctors Park, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting the Milwaukee County Parks Department in this park's upkeep, has done an excellent job of creating and executing projects to improve this important community asset.

Several years ago, just to the south of Doctors Park, the village restored the path from North Beach Drive up the bluff that connects to East Fox Lane. Earlier in village life, this was a vehicular road that connected Beach Drive to points north. The Village rehabilitation project included a storm water channel lined with rip-rap parallel to a stone path. Severe storm events have damaged the trail and the village is working out a more permanent solution to the problem.

Many of us know about the path adjacent to North Beach Drive that descends the bluff at Lake Drive. This used to be known as Spring Drive. (For years there was a public spring at the foot of the bluff.) The path has a steep grade that makes the climb a worthy challenge.

The ravine bridge, a stunning park-like space and a walking and cycling artery between North Barnett Lane and North Bridge Lane, reopened in November 2014. That this public-private partnership was a success is an opinion held beyond Fox Point, Footbridge Friends and other project supporters: the project has been recognized by and has received awards from the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Public Works Association, the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association, and the Milwaukee Public Policy Forum. Hopefully, residents will enjoy the new bridge for another 100 years.

Although in a very early stage, options are being explored for a path up the ravine from Beach Drive to the bridge, and then by walkway

or stairway up the side of the ravine to one of the approaches to the bridge. It appears that the village has a storm-water-only right-of-way along this route—and that a walking path would require easements from the property owners on either side of the ravine. Response to this proposal among Beach Drive residents at or near the ravine's end appears positive; the interest of residents near the bridge and west along the ravine is less certain.

A third path exists on the east end of Green Tree Road beginning at Barnett Lane and extends to the lake bluff. This is part of the village-owned right-of-way from Green Tree Road down the bluff to Beach Drive that traces an old vehicular road—later a footpath. The village closed the entirety of this path in 1997 due to the bluff's instability. In 2013, village reopened the portion of the path (between two homes) that extends to the edge of the lake bluff, where, from a bench, visitors can look down and across to the lake.

One day, hopefully, the path in its entirety can be rehabilitated and reopened. The problem is cost. In 2001, the Village commissioned a slope restoration feasibility study for this path. The study suggested two bluff stabilization alternatives: partial or complete.

The consultant estimated the cost of partial stabilization to be about \$100,000. This involved the installation of soldier pile and lagging wall at a cost of \$607 per linear foot. The complete stabilization alternative that included slope regrading increased the cost significantly, with work on many more linear feet. The village has not formally studied the matter in the intervening years but a lasting solution to the bluff stabilization issue could be expensive.

More certain is that the restoration of this trail would greatly enhance the connectivity of our pathway system, and together with a new trail up the ravine to the bridge, would make near-lake walking opportunities within the village second to none.

*Douglas H. Frazer is a trustee on the Fox Point Village board. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.*