

**MNDOT HISTORIC ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT  
STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

WB-LKC-093  
CS 7906  
Lake City Concourse

<b>Historic Name</b> <b>Other Name</b>	Lake City Concourse	<b>CS #</b> <b>SHPO Inv #</b>	7906 WB-LKC-093
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<b>Location</b>	NE side of TH 61 between Elm and Minnesota St	<b>Hwy District Reference</b>	TH 61 6A 73.7
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<b>City/Township County</b> <b>Twp Rng Sec</b> <b>USGS Quad</b> <b>UTM</b>	Lake City, City of Wabasha 111N 12W Sec 4 Lake City Z15 E558850 N4921380	<b>Acres</b> <b>Rest Area Class</b>	.5 4
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<b>Designer</b>	Nichols, A R, Attributed	<b>SP #</b>	7906-08 61-3-24-1
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<b>Builder</b>	National Youth Administration (NYA) (1940 phase)	<b>SHPO Review #</b>	
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<b>Historic Use</b> <b>Present Use</b>	Roadside Parking Area Roadside Parking Area	<b>MHS Photo #</b>	013519.02-18
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<b>Yr of Landscape Design</b>	1938-40	<b>MnDOT Historic Photo Album</b>	Nic 1.17    Nic 1.25 Ols 3.169    Ols 3.170 Ols 3.171
<b>Overall Site Integrity</b>	Intact/Slightly Altered		
<b>Review Required</b>	Yes		

<b>National Register Status</b>	Eligible, see Statement of Significance
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<b>Historic Context</b>	Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960
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**List of Standing Structures**

Feat#	Feature Type	Year Built
01	Overlook Wall	1938-40
02	Overlook Wall	1938
03	Overlook Wall	1938
04	Curb, Stone	1938-40
05	Marker	1971
06	Marker	Ca. 1988

<b>Fieldwork Date</b>	05-13-97
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<b>Prep by</b>	Gemini Research Dec. 98    G1. 36
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<b>Prep for</b>	Site Development Unit Cultural Resources Unit Environmental Studies Unit
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NOTE: Landscape features are not listed in this table

<b>Final Report</b>	Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways (1998)
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■ BRIEF

The Lake City Concourse is located on 0.5-acre site on the eastern side of T.H. 61 (locally called South Lakeshore Drive) within Lake City on the western shore of Lake Pepin. The site runs along a 3-block stretch of T.H. 61 between roughly Elm Street and Minnesota Street.

■ STANDING STRUCTURES

**Overlook Wall A.** Built 1938-1940 (1940 construction by the NYA). The principal structure on the site is a large stone overlook wall constructed on the western shore of Lake Pepin to provide a view of the lake. The wall is built of tan, random rubble limestone laid on a concrete footing. The wall is approximately 18" thick and 2'6" tall with 26"-square piers that project about 6" above the wall. The piers are built of coursed ashlar, roughly-cut limestone, while the wall is coursed rubble.

The wall was built in two phases. The northern and southern portions were built first and had been completed by October of 1938 (according to a dated historic photo). The large semicircular overlook in the center was built second and had been completed by May of 1940 (according to a dated historic photo). The northern and southern sections are straight wall sections, each with a curving lookout bay. The bays are built of coursed ashlar, rather than the random rubble that was used for the circular portion of the wall.

The large, semicircular overlook wall was built between the two straight wall sections. The curve of the wall is interrupted by two 16'-wide rectangular lookout bays that project to the northeast and southeast. (A 4'-long section of the northern lookout bay has been removed to provide a pedestrian opening and the southern lookout bay has been reduced in height by about one-half.) There were also originally 6'-wide stone and concrete staircases located just north and south of the ends of the curve. These stairways linked the semicircular overlook with the two wall sections that were built during the first phase. The stairways have been removed leaving simple pedestrian openings in the wall.

The inner side of all portions of Overlook Wall A was originally lined with a 4'-wide flagstone walkway lined with stone curbing. The flagstone originally extended the length of the entire site from the northern end of Wall A to the southern end of Wall C. Most of the flagstone has been covered with asphalt or replaced with (or covered by) concrete, but flagstone remains exposed in the quarter-circle terraces at the ends of the curve and lines the entire wall south of the curve. The section of flagstone extending south of the curve is 3 1/2' wide.

Along the outer side of Overlook Wall A is a recently-poured concrete walkway (specified as gravel on the plans). This walkway leads to a breakwater east of the wall's curve that projects about 60' northeast into the lake. Within Overlook Wall A is an asphalt-paved parking area and a roughly-circular curb-lined island.

**Overlook Wall B.** Built 1938, This stone overlook wall is located on the eastern side of T.H. 61 at its intersection with West Lakewood Avenue, one block south of Overlook Wall A. Historic photos show that it was completed by August of 1938, suggesting that it may have been built simultaneously with the first two sections of Overlook Wall A. The wall is tan, random rubble limestone, while the piers are coursed ashlar. It is similar in design and

materials to Wall A. It is a straight wall with a curved lookout bay. The western face of the wall is lined with a 3 1/2'-wide flagstone sidewalk that forms a flagstone terrace within the lookout bay. This flagstone walkway originally linked Overlook Walls A, B, and C. A new concrete walkway with a pipe railing and concrete block retaining wall has been added to the eastern side of the wall.

**Overlook Wall C.** Built 1938. This stone overlook wall is located on the eastern side of T.H. 61 at its intersection with West Minnesota Street, one block south of Overlook Wall B. Historic photos show that it was completed before the large semicircular overlook wall, suggesting that it was built in 1938. (It was probably built simultaneously with the first two sections of Overlook Wall A and Overlook Wall B.) In general, the wall is similar in design and materials to Overlook Walls A and B, although it has two fewer piers than Wall B. The wall is tan, random rubble limestone, while the piers are coursed ashlar. The wall has a curved lookout bay. The western side of the wall is lined with a 3 1/2'-wide flagstone sidewalk that forms a flagstone terrace within the lookout bay. This flagstone walkway originally linked Overlook Walls A, B, and C. A new concrete walkway, with a pipe railing and concrete block retaining wall, has been added to the eastern side of the wall.

**Limestone Curbing.** Built 1938-1941 (1940 construction by the NYA). Limestone curbing originally lined the flagstone walkway throughout the entire site, and also lined the parking area's center island. The only section of limestone curbing that remains today is located on the eastern side of the island.

**Stone Marker.** Built 1971 by MHS. A stone lectern-style marker is located about 3' east of Overlook Wall A near the midpoint of the wall's curve. The marker is built of random ashlar, rockfaced, buff-colored limestone. It is approximately 5'3" wide, 4' deep, and 4'6" tall on the taller side. On the western side of the marker is a metal plaque that is mounted at a slant. At the base of the plaque is the seal of the Minnesota Historical Society and the year 1971. The text of the plaque addresses Lake City as the Birthplace of Waterskiing. (See marker text at the end of this document.)

**Metal Marker.** Built 1988 by MnDNR. This marker is located about 16' east of Overlook Wall A, along the wall's curve. The marker is built of metal with a plastic sign mounted at a slant. The text indicates that the marker was erected by the Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) in 1988 as part of the Great River Road marking program.

#### ■ OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND PLANTINGS

Overlook Wall A encloses an asphalt-paved parking area and a roughly-circular island. The island is planted with grass and flower gardens (the island shows as sod in the original planting plan). There is a flagpole (with no exposed base) standing east of the wall near the midpoint of the wall's curve. Original street lights that show in historic photos near all three wall segments have been replaced with modern lights.

Three or four tall evergreens standing near the southern end of Overlook Wall A appear to be the only remaining original plantings. There are woody shrubs (recently planted) east of Overlook Wall A. There are narrow strips of grass and areas of gravel along the site's poured concrete walkways.

The original planting plan for Overlook Wall A specifies 27 Japanese Creeper vines to be planted so that they climb Overlook Wall A, groups of Red Cedar trees flanking the two stairways, and 10 American Elm to be planted north and south of the wall's curve. The plan also specifies groups of Pfitzer's Juniper shrubs at three points along the gravel path that curves along the outer side of the wall, and a curving hedge of 240 Morrow Honeysuckle lining the outer side of this gravel path. The plan also specifies four types of ground cover.

The topography of the site is flat.

#### ■ **SETTING**

The site was built on the western shore of Lake Pepin (through which the Mississippi River runs) with an excellent view of the lake. The site is surrounded by residential neighborhoods and commercial structures to the north, west, and south and the lake to the east. T.H. 61 (also called South Lakeshore Drive within Lake City) runs along the western side of the site. There is a breakwater extending northeast of Overlook Wall A and a marina north of the site. A walking path along the lakeshore extends north and south of the site. There is a city park located north of the site that is apparently called Lewis McChail Memorial Park Rest Area.

#### ■ **INTEGRITY**

##### **Alterations**

The second phase of Overlook Wall A (the large curved portion of the wall) appears to have been built closely, but not exactly, to plan. No plans for the first phase of Overlook Wall A and for Overlook Walls B and C have been located. Most original plantings have been removed.

In general, the Lake City Concourse site retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. There have been some changes to the design and materials as described below, but in general the original character of the site remains.

Alterations to Overlook Wall A (including island and parking area): A 4'-long section of the northern rectangular lookout bay in the wall's curve has been removed to provide a pedestrian opening and the southern rectangular lookout bay has been reduced in height by about half. The two stone stairways have been removed. Most of the flagstone walkway has been covered with asphalt or replaced with concrete. Most of the limestone curbing has been removed or replaced. The wall is missing some stones and has been poorly patched with various mortar materials. The gravel walkway along the outer side of the wall's curve has been replaced with poured concrete. A new concrete walkway with a pipe railing and concrete block retaining wall have been added to the eastern side of the wall both north and south of the wall's curve. The asphalt-paved parking area was originally gravel. Flower gardens have been added to the circular island. Original plantings have been removed. A flagpole (with no exposed base) has been added east of the wall near the midpoint of the wall's curve. A 1964 photo shows one of the Roadside Development unit's standard wooden hanging-arm signs on the island. The sign would probably have read: "Roadside Parking Area." A stone marker was erected east of the wall in 1971 and a metal marker was added in 1988.

Alterations to Overlook Wall B: The wall's mortar has been poorly patched. There is a patch in the wall's flagstone where a street light originally stood. A new concrete walkway with a pipe railing and concrete block retaining wall have been added to the eastern side of the wall. The flagstone walkway that originally linked Wall B with Walls A and C has been replaced with concrete.

Alterations to Overlook Wall C: The wall's mortar has been patched. There is a patch in the wall's flagstone. A new concrete walkway with a pipe railing and concrete block retaining wall have been added to the eastern side of the wall. The flagstone walkway that originally linked Wall C with Walls A and B has been replaced with concrete.

#### **Notes on Condition**

The walls are in fair condition. Overlook Wall A and Overlook Wall C are missing some stones and need mortar repair. All three walls have been poorly patched. The markers are in good condition.

The site is well maintained.

#### **■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

It is likely that the Lake City Concourse was designed by Arthur R. Nichols of the firm Morell and Nichols. Nichols served as Consulting Landscape Architect for the Minnesota Department of Highways in the 1930s and designed most roadside development sites built during this period. Photographs of the Lake City site appear in an album of photographs that Nichols compiled for the Minnesota Department of Highways circa 1940. The photographs serve as a sort of portfolio of Nichols' work for the Department, and the inclusion of Lake City photos strongly suggests that he designed the site.

The site was built in two phases. During the first phase, the northern and southern portions of Overlook Wall A (completed by October of 1938), Overlook Wall B (completed by August of 1938), and Overlook Wall C were built. The large semicircular wall and parking area was built as a second phase which had been completed by May of 1940 (as per dated historic photos). The only original construction plans that have been located are for the second phase.

The highway department's *Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development* for 1938 describes the first phase. The report indicates that work completed at the site in 1938 included the construction of stonemasonry walls and flagstone walkway; gravel surfacing; the installation of 6 catch basins; the construction of 111 cubic feet of concrete footing; and the laying of 1,139 lineal feet of concrete curb. Landscaping included the installation of 74 shade trees and 294 deciduous shrubs; the removal of 257 cubic yards of riprap; and clean-up, hauling, topsoiling, seeding, and sodding (*Annual Report* 1938:5-6).

The report also indicates that this was a "regular Federal Aid Project" -- as differentiated from a federal relief agency project -- suggesting that the Department of Highways provided all of the labor and that no federal relief program was involved (*Annual Report* 1938:cover page, 5).

The second phase of construction was completed by the National Youth Administration (NYA) working in cooperation with the highway department. Construction plans were signed in

December 1939 and January of 1940. The large curved wall was completed by December of 1940 (as per historic photos), and the plan title sheet contains the notation "Final Plans Construction Division N.Y.A. June 30, 1941." The plans were signed by Harold E. Olson (Engineer of Roadside Development), C. W. Lilly (Engineer of Plans), S. Rex Green (Engineer of Lands and Right of Way), G. G. Gladman (Engineer of Survey and Design), J. C. Robbers (District Engineer), O. L. Kipp (Construction Engineer), and Jay T. Ellison (Chief Engineer). The engineers signed the plans in December of 1939 and January of 1940.

Site Development Unit files indicate that in 1961 there were two toilets and drinking water at this site.

The stone marker was added to the site in 1971 by the Minnesota Historical Society. The metal marker was erected in 1988 by the Department of Natural Resources as part of the Great River Road marking program.

#### ■ PREVIOUS SHPO REVIEWS

There apparently have been no previous SHPO cultural resource reviews of the property.

#### ■ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lake City Concourse was built in 1938-1940 by the MHD in cooperation with the NYA. It is one of 37 stone overlook walls recorded in this inventory, and is unusual in this study because it has two auxiliary walls built along the lakeshore several feet south of the main wall. Lake City is one of 19 sites in the inventory on which the NYA worked. It is one of more than 60 sites in the inventory that were designed by, or attributed to, Arthur R. Nichols.

This property has been evaluated within the historic context "Roadside Development on Minnesota Trunk Highways, 1920-1960." It is recommended that the Lake City Concourse is eligible for the National Register under this historic context because it meets the following registration requirements:

~~Rare Federal Relief Property Type. Lake City Concourse is one of only two overlooks in this study that project out into large lakes. (The other is the Garrison Concourse on Mille Lacs Lake.) (National Register Criterion A.)~~ Correction: wall does not project into lake; see <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/wayrep-suppl.pdf> for additional information.

Significant to the History of Roadside Development. The Lake City Concourse is among the 68 Depression-era properties in the inventory that represent the MHD's first large-scale effort to construct roadside development facilities in the state. The site is important as an excellent example of the work of the NYA and the MHD. The property is an example of the distinctive and well-constructed public facilities, built by the MHD in partnership with federal relief agencies, that met the objectives of roadside development while providing essential work and job training to the nation's unemployed during the Depression. (National Register Criterion A.)

Design Significance. The Lake City Concourse is an elaborate and unusual example of the stone overlook walls built by the Roadside Development Division. Its design is an excellent example of the application of the "National Park Service Rustic Style" to a roadside development facility, and skillfully exploits and enhances T.H. 61's striking views of Lake Pepin. The

overlook has stonework of excellent quality, and displays the special labor-intensive construction techniques and distinctive use of indigenous materials that characterize both the Rustic style and federal relief construction in Minnesota. Furthermore, the Lake City Concourse is an important example of the roadside development work of prominent landscape architect A. R. Nichols, to whom its design is attributed. (National Register Criterion C.)

The property may also be associated with the "Federal Relief Construction, 1933-1943" and "Tourism and Recreation in the Lake Regions, 1870-1945" historic contexts.

#### ■ OTHER COMMENTS

This property may require further evaluation for potential archaeological resources.

T.H. 61 is very busy past the site, which is wedged between T.H. 61 and the water.

This site may also be associated with local historic contexts established by the City of Lake City's Heritage Preservation Commission.

The text of the historic marker is associated with the town of Lake City. It is not specifically associated with the site of the wayside rest. The text of the Great River Road marker is associated with the general area.

#### ■ REFERENCES

Anderson, Rolf T. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Oct. 9, 1990; amended Aug. 30, 1993.

*Annual Report of the Accomplishments of Roadside Development Along the Trunk Highways in Minnesota.* Minnesota Department of Highways. 1938.

*Final Report National Youth Administration for the State of Minnesota: Sept. 1935 to July 1943.* U.S. National Youth Administration, Minnesota. 1943.

Nichols, A. R., comp. *Album of Roadside Development Projects.* 7 vols. Photo album prepared for the Roadside Development Division, Minnesota Department of Highways. Ca. 1937-1941.

Olson, Harold E., comp. *Historical Markers in Minnesota.* 4 vols. Prepared by the Roadside Development Division, Minnesota Department of Highways. Ca. 1942, updated ca. 1954.

Reiman, Richard A. *The New Deal and American Youth.* Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Site Plans. Minnesota Department of Transportation, St. Paul.

Tweton, Jerome D. *The New Deal at the Grass Roots. Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota.* St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988.

■ **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND MARKER TEXTS**

The limestone used to construct this site was probably quarried locally. Outcroppings of the Shakopee and St. Lawrence strata of limestone (dolomite) cap the bluffs along the Mississippi River throughout the region. The stone was quarried in a number of places, including Lake City and Frontenac (approximately 6 miles north of Lake City) where quarrying began in 1855.

Lake City, one of the earliest resort towns in Minnesota, is located on Lake Pepin, which is a widening of the Mississippi River. Euro-Americans first settled Lake City in 1853-1854. Lake City was platted in 1856 and incorporated in 1872.

Arthur R. Nichols' firm, Morell and Nichols, also served as Consulting Landscape Architects to the City of Lake City during the 1940s and 1950s. In the Morell and Nichols collection at the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota, there are several plans, drawings, and notations referencing lakefront improvements and park plans, including plans for improvements immediately north and south of the Lake City Concourse.

**Text of Plaque on Stone Marker**

"Birthplace of Waterskiing"

" 'I decided that if you could ski on snow, you could ski on water.' In 1922, after first trying barrel staves, then snow skis, eighteen year old Ralph W. Samuelson succeeded in waterskiing on eight-foot-long pine boards, steamed in boiling water to curve the tips. During the next fifteen years, Samuelson put on one-man waterskiing exhibitions, donating most of the admission charges to Lake City for the purchase of harbor and park land. Because of Samuelson's pioneering efforts in this popular sport, the American Water Ski Association in 1966 officially recognized Lake City as the birthplace of waterskiing."

"Erected by the Minnesota Historical Society 1971"

**Text of Metal "Great River Road" Marker**

"A Very Old Fish Story"

[text unavailable from MnDNR]



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Liz Walton  
**FROM:** Sue Granger   
**RE:** Drawings of Lake City by Morell and Nichols  
**DATE:** April 28, 2003

Enclosed are two drawings that should be filed with the Lake City Overlook inventory file.

As you know, the Lake City Overlook was designed by A.R. Nichols and built in 1938-1940. A few years later, Nichols consulted for the City of Lake City on lake front development that included the Mn/DOT site. (There is already a note to this effect in the inventory file.)

These two drawings, held in the Morell and Nichols collection at the Northwest Architectural Archives, date from this consultation with the City. (See citation at lower left corner of drawings.)

The first drawing, "Map of Existing Conditions," is dated December 1945. The second drawing, "Detail Plan for Park Improvement of Lake Front," is dated Dec. 1945 and revised Feb. 1946.

The first drawing confirms that a walkway was developed around the curve of the large wall. The walkway was entered through openings in the wall. The drawing seems to confirm that the stairs drawn on the available original plans for the overlook were not built. (There was some doubt about the walkway and stairs in our 1998 inventory form and in HDR's recent treatment report for Lake City.)

The second drawing is valuable because it gives insight into how Nichols believed the plantings and walkways around the Mn/DOT site should be treated. (Note, for example, the extensive boulevard and site plantings and the rectilinear corners on the path around the large overlook.) The second drawing also shows development of park land for several blocks along the lake.

We are not sure how much of the design work on the second drawing was implemented. Further research is needed. Historical photos in the Minnesota Historical Society collection show at least some of the Nichols-designed lake front parks as they were executed.

Nichols consulted again for the City in 1958, and perhaps at other times. We know that the 1958 work included a design for the park and marina area immediately west of the Mn/DOT overlook, but do not know the extent of the consultation or whether it included the Mn/DOT site.

We recommend that all of these resources be studied before planning future treatment of the Lake City Overlook.

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### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Liz Walton  
**FROM:** Sue Granger  
**RE:** Lake City Concourse  
**DATE:** Oct. 23, 2006

This memo is written in response to your email note of Oct. 11, 2006, regarding the steps at Lake City Concourse.

The steps you've asked about extend from Overlook Wall A (just north of the apex of its curve) toward the breakwater. We neglected to inventory the steps in the original Historic Roadside Development Properties survey. (We probably should have also inventoried the breakwater.)

#### *Original Construction*

Based on the evidence described herein, we think the steps were in place by circa 1920 when the Minnesota Department of Highways (MHD) drew its original right-of-way map for this location.

Our guess is that the steps were made of individual stone slabs (or perhaps slabs of poured concrete over a base of stone rubble). The current concrete treads may represent a repair or upgrade of the original steps. The pipe railing probably dates from the 1920s-1930s.

The MHD right-of-way map (which predates the Lake City Concourse) shows what appears to be a straight sidewalk leading from the highway curblin to the breakwater. Because of the topography, this sidewalk must have contained steps, which may be the steps that exist today (or may be the base or core of the steps that exist today).

A set of steps at this location is drawn on one set of plans for the site. The drawing is labeled "Detail of Concrete Steps" at station 27+01 on Sheet 2 of 9 for S.P. 7906 (TH 61-3) (9 sheets, plans approved July 21, 1936). The steps drawn are reinforced concrete. They are about 4' wide, 34' long, and consist of about 23 steps with 6" risers. They were apparently never built, since the existing steps don't appear to be monolithic reinforced concrete.

Steps at this location are not shown or referenced on the two other sets of plans we know about. They are a nine-sheet set for S.P. 61=3-24-1A (approved June 1937), and a four-

sheet set for S.P. 7906-08 (61-3) (approved Jan. 1940, stamped “final plans, construction division, NYA June 31, 1941”).

The existing steps at this location may appear on Morell and Nichols’ “Map of Existing Conditions,” which was drawn Dec. 1945 for the Lake City Waterfront Development Commission. (This map is in the Northwest Architectural Archives at the U of M.) The pen lines on this map suggest steps that are not a monolithic set, but are more informal like the existing steps.

### *Current Undertaking*

**Steps.** Is it possible to add a pipe railing to the steps without rebuilding them? This would be our first preference.

If rebuilding the steps is necessary, we recommend designing the new steps to be very simple and to take cues from existing conditions. For example, they should be as narrow as possible (e.g., 3’ feet wide), like the existing steps. We suggest that the risers be shallow (e.g., 6” high) and the treads long, like the existing steps. One or two landings could be added in the middle and at the bottom to make up extra distance. The rebuilt steps could be built of limestone slabs (which may have been their original material) or built of poured concrete.

We would use a very simple unobtrusive pipe railing, like the existing railing. We would leave a gap between the railing and steps, like existing conditions. However, if possible we would place the railing on one side only so it is less noticeable visually. We would avoid the double-rail railing design used near Overlook Walls B and C because this design is more conspicuous and competes visually with the historic stonework. (See our inventory photos for the double railing near Walls B and C.)

**Stone Slab Walkway.** Currently there is a walkway of uneven stone slabs from the base of the steps to the concrete breakwater. We recommend doing nothing to the walkway and leaving it as it is. (Only those who really want to go all the way to the breakwater use it.) Our second preference would be to leave the stone slabs in place, and add a very simple pipe railing to one side of the walkway. The third preference would be to remove the stone slabs and make a gravel path to the breakwater that is the same width and elevation as the existing stone walkway. Fourth would be to remove the stone slabs and make a bituminous path the same width and elevation as the existing stone walkway. We strongly advise against building a poured concrete sidewalk to the breakwater since the site already has significant amounts of modern concrete sidewalk which compete visually with the stonework and add an overly-modern feeling to the site.

**Plantings.** The historic planting plan shows a somewhat formal treatment (including clipped hedges) near the curved overlook wall and along city boulevards, and a more naturalistic treatment on the lakeshore (see Sheet 4 of 4, S.P. 7906-08, appr. Jan. 1940, stamped NYA June 31, 1941; see also Sheet 3 of 9 and Sheet 5 of 9, S.P. S.P. 61=3-24-1A, appr. June 1937). The planting suggestions you make sound consistent with the original design intent.

*Extra Note About the Pair of Steps in Overlook Wall A*

The pair of steps drawn on plans at the ends of Overlook Wall A's curve (close to the TH 61 curb line) were apparently never built. (This is an error on our original inventory form, which states the steps were removed.) Evidence from the plans:

Sheet 3 of 4 for S.P. 7906-08 (61-3) shows the pair of 6'-wide stone and concrete stairways located near the ends of the curved overlook wall (4 sheets, approved Jan. 1940, stamped "final plans, construction division, NYA June 31, 1941").

Sheet 2 of 9 for S.P. 61=3-24-1A shows only pedestrian openings near the ends of the curved overlook wall and no stairs (9 sheets, approved June 1937). Sheet 4 of 9 of the same plan set shows the steps, but they are labeled "Steps Future."

Morell and Nichols' "Map of Existing Conditions," which was drawn Dec. 1945 for the Lake City Waterfront Development Commission, shows no steps (Northwest Architectural Archives at the U of M).

The two nine-sheet sets of plans and the Morell and Nichols' "Map of Existing Conditions" were found after the original inventory was conducted.

If you have any questions or need more information, please let me or Scott know.  
Thank you.