

RAVINES ARE OUR LEGACY



Since the time of the glaciers, rain water and snow melt have sculpted Lake Forest's ravines. However, as we developed Lake Forest into the community we now know and love, our actions have inadvertently accelerated that natural erosion process to unnatural levels.

Over the years, the volume of runoff from rain, snow melt, and sprinklers has increased as homes, patios, and roads replaced prairies and wooded areas. Now, more water rushes through the ravines, speeding up the erosion process and carrying pollutants.

In addition, invasive or non-native plants have replaced hearty native plants in many areas. The invasive plants have flimsy root systems, which means they don't hold the soil as well as native plants do.

Left unchecked, ravine and bluff erosion can cause significant damage: polluting our drinking water and swimming beaches; undermining buildings, roads, and bridges; breaking sewer lines; and decreasing property values as land literally washes away.

Without thoughtful actions, our unique landscape features could become dangerous and unsightly ditches that make properties smaller, instead of adding value to our community.



The Lake Forest Collaborative for Environmental Leadership (LFCEL) is a partnership of The City of Lake Forest, Lake Forest Elementary School District #67, Lake Forest High School District #115, Lake Forest Open Lands Association, and Lake Forest College. The Collaborative formed to bring together the community to educate and engage in environmental action and to promote sustainable practices within Lake Forest. LFCEL received a grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management Program to implement an education and engagement program to increase awareness of our ravines' environmental value, while engaging the community in actions to protect and restore them.



Important Information for Homeowners Near Ravines

STEEP SLOPES, LONG LEGACY

Lake Forest is home to 15 ancient and incredibly unique landscape features called ravines. These tree-covered slopes are part of a dynamic landscape that defines Lake Forest as more than just a city—it is a family-friendly *community*, blessed with green lands and blue waters.

Lake Forest has grown into today's vibrant community because generations of residents have embraced our natural surroundings. The flow of our landscape, the natural highs and lows of our lands, is reflected in the curve of our streets and the architecture of our built surroundings.

Ravines aren't just beautiful landscape features. Ravines *work*. When they are healthy, ravines provide valuable and irreplaceable services for our community:



■ Ravines drain rain water away from homes and basements, reducing flooding

■ Ravines protect our drinking water source—Lake Michigan—from pollutants



■ Healthy ravines with native trees and plants reduce erosion, keeping our land where it belongs

■ Ravines provide homes to migratory songbirds, endangered plants and spawning fish

Healthy ravines work hard and well. But damaged, unhealthy ravines, can actually cause problems, like increasing Lake Michigan pollution, eroding property, and increasing flooding.

OUR ACTIONS MATTER

When restored and healthy, our ravines are beautiful assets, an integral part of our community's character, and part of what sets Lake Forest apart.

While the City and nonprofit groups are actively restoring ravines, like Seminary Ravine, which is adjacent to Forest Park, **homeowners own most of our ravines**. Whether your home is next to a ravine or your property extends all the way down into a ravine, there are important actions you can take to keep Lake Forest's ravines healthy and beautiful.



■ Never dump yard waste like leaves, branches, grass clippings, or mulch into ravines. This can accelerate erosion, damage native plants, and ruin beautiful vistas. Instruct lawn care companies to keep your yard waste out of the ravines, too.

■ Add a buffer of native plants along your property adjacent to the ravine. Keep turf grass, play sets, and pools at least 10 feet from the top edge of a ravine to prevent erosion. (For sample landscape plans and lists of native trees, grasses, shrubs, and flowering plants, visit: www.CityofLakeForest.com/environmental-initiatives.)

■ Reduce stormwater running off your property into the ravine by planting rain gardens and using rain barrels. Minimize water use and irrigation sprinklers, especially near the top edge of a ravine.



■ Limit paved areas along ravines. Use porous paving wherever possible.

■ Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly and only when necessary. If you must fertilize, only use fertilizers that are phosphorous-free.

■ Keep fences out of the ravines; they not only ruin the beautiful vistas that ravines provide, but also increase erosion and limit natural animal migrations.