

Illinois State Geological Survey motorcoach tours of Chicago's lakefront celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Burnham Plan.

# The Centennial Celebration of a Shoreline Vision

Story and Photo By  
Michael Chrzastowski

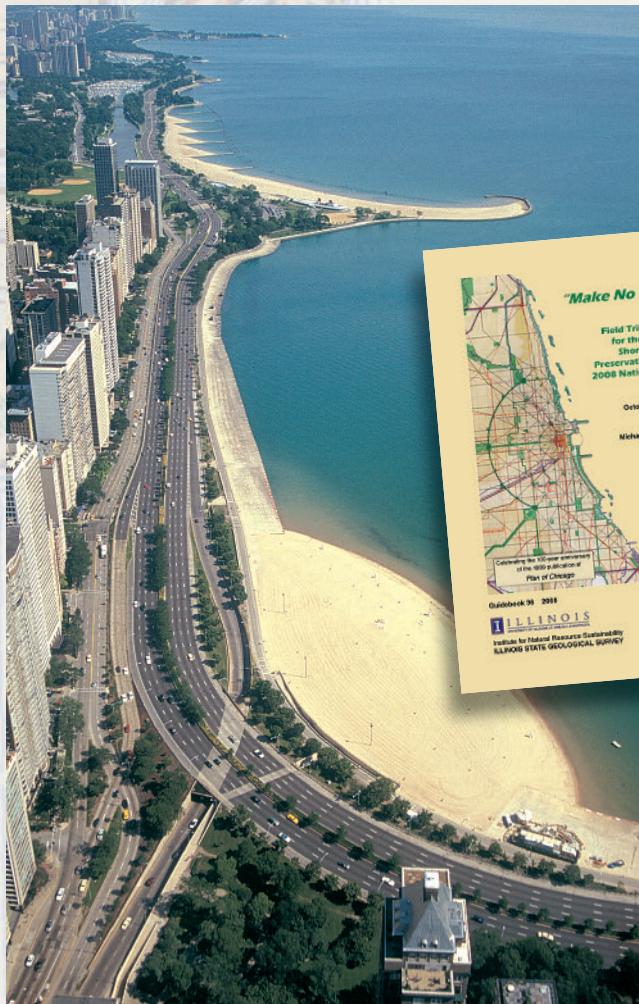
**T**he Chicago lakefront is a world-class urban shoreline dominated by parkland. It is a design and engineering achievement without parallel among coastal cities.

What is notable about the Chicago lakefront is that it is nearly all man-made and built over a time span of more than 175 years. In the mid- to late-1800s there was limited public space along this shore, and there was no vision for the role that the lakefront would play in the future growth of the city.

Then, in 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition was held at what is now Chicago's Jackson Park. This exposition provided the opportunity to demonstrate how planning and design could transform the lakefront land into parkland. Chicago architect Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912) was the lead architect for the 1893 exposition.

Following the exposition's success, Burnham was contracted by Chicago business leaders to develop a plan for the 20th century growth of the city and surrounding area. In 1909, with co-author William Bennett (1874-1954), Burnham completed the landmark "Plan of Chicago".

This broad-range planning achievement provided a vision for transportation networks, forest preserves, commercial development and parkland. A major vision of "Plan of Chicago" was a contiguous lakefront park system that included islands, lagoons, promontories and a sculptured shoreline. Commonly called "The Burnham Plan" in honor of the lead author, the "Plan of Chicago" remains a



historical milestone in the history of the Chicago lakefront.

This year is the centennial of the publication of "Plan of Chicago," and numerous celebration events are being coordinated by the Chicago-based Burnham Plan Centennial Committee (<http://burnham-plan100.uchicago.edu>). These events will provide the public with the opportunity to commemorate and learn about this historic planning document.

The Illinois State Geological Survey, in partnership with Chicago's Friends of the Parks, will be conducting half-day, narrated motorcoach field trips for the public to experience the story of how the Burn-

ham Plan was created and how it was, and was not, followed in construction of the 20th century lakefront. The tours will include stops to see landscape features remaining from the 1893

Columbian Exposition, several of the uniquely engineered beaches on the lakefront, and where opportunities remain for improving the lakefront legacy for future generations.

Tours will be held on Saturday mornings (9 a.m.-1p.m.) beginning and ending near

Millennium Park (Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street). Dates for the tours are May 16, June 20 and July 18. Registration will begin in the early spring through the Friend of the Parks Web site ([www.fotp.org/](http://www.fotp.org/)). A nominal fee will cover transportation costs, snacks and a full-color guidebook that tells the

story of the Burnham Plan and the Chicago lakefront. The guidebook, "Make No Little Plans" (ISGS Guidebook 36), tells the story of the lakefront and Burnham Plan and can be ordered through the Illinois State Geological Survey Web site ([www.isgs.illinois.edu](http://www.isgs.illinois.edu)) or by calling (217) 244-2415.



Dr. Michael Chrzastowski is a geologist in the Engineering and Coastal Geology Geologic Mapping and Hydrogeology Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois State Geological Survey.