

# West Fork Riverwalk

The West Fork of the North Branch of the Chicago River is historically significant to downtown Glenview's identity. A day's wagon ride away from Chicago, it was a stopover for travelers and a trading point for local farmers, according to Libby Hill's *The Chicago River* (2000). At 60 feet wide and just 3-4 feet deep, it provided scenic opportunities for recreation: swimming, fishing, and ice skating in the winter. As the Village developed, the river was straightened and channelized, leading to the degradation of riparian habitat. The West Fork Riverwalk restoration project aims to improve ecosystem health and to provide downtown visitors with a place to enjoy the river. Community benefits

include a walkway and seat wall along the east bank, and structural improvements include a retention wall and bank stabilization features.

The West Fork originates in Lincolnshire and flows south through Glenview just west of Waukegan Road before entering the forest preserves to the east. At Golf Road it joins with the Middle Fork and the Skokie River to form the North Branch of the Chicago River, thus making this small tributary's contributions impactful throughout the region.

Prior to restoration efforts, severe soil erosion and invasive species threatened the riverbanks and reduced biodiversity. A Boy Scout troop meeting at nearby Our Lady of Perpetual Help removed litter and invasive species, including buckthorn, from a 0.85 acre area and planted native trees and riparian vegetation. Grants from Section 319 of the Clean Water Act program and the ComEd Green Region program funded stabilizing infrastructure and native vegetation. This combination promotes aeration, reduces erosion, and intercepts harmful pollutants before they enter the main body of the Chicago River. By restoring the West Fork, Glenview is contributing to regional watershed health!

Location: Shopper's Row north of Glenview Rd

Construction complete: October 2015

Benefits:

- Less pollutants through reduced erosion
- In-stream riffle structures increase aeration
- Improved riparian habitat
- Public green space
- Increased biodiversity

Keywords:

Green space: Areas of protected land or water in which development is indefinitely set aside.

Biodiversity: The degree of variation of life forms in a given area. It is a measure of health for ecosystems.

Riparian habitat: Area between dry land and river/stream. These habitats are directly related with the health and success of the adjacent rivers/streams. They help filter out pollutants, reduce erosion into the water, and promote biodiversity.

Invasive species: Species, most often not native to a region, that outcompete target plants, causing environmental degradation. Buckthorn is an invasive plant in Glenview.



Above: Under construction, December 2014

Below: August 2016



The Village of  
**Glenview**