

## **Evanston to Test Waters for Putting in a Marina**

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With boat docking space at a premium along the Lake Michigan shoreline, Evanston officials have launched a \$100,000 study to examine whether to build a marina.

The Army Corps of Engineers will conduct and pay for the study, which will include a survey of boaters and residents to gauge support for a marina adjacent to Calvary Cemetery on the city's southeastern edge.

"I'm not a boater, but I thought it could be an interesting idea for the city," said Ald. Steve Bernstein (4th), who supported the project.

The survey will begin in July with a final report expected by September, officials said. The study also will examine environmental issues such as whether a marina would cause water pollution, traffic congestion or noise.

"I'm not convinced this project will or should go forward, but I think we should study all the environmental questions," said U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), who helped get funding for the study.

In the mid-1960s and early 1970s, Evanston explored building a marina at the same location but pulled back because of its multimillion-dollar price tag. There also were concerns the site would need significant landfill to provide space for offices and boat storage, officials said.

A final decision remains years away, according to city officials who said they couldn't estimate what a marina might cost.

"With everything we have to do, this is still at least a five- to six-year project," said Doug Gaynor, director of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, who is overseeing the study for Evanston.

The sharp demand for marina space prompted city officials more than a year ago to request federal funding for the study, which was approved in April.

Long waiting lists are reported for boat rental space in Wilmette's marina and the five most

northern marinas in Chicago's system. A marina in Waukegan and one in Winthrop Harbor also are nearly filled.

"We have a 5- to 12-year waiting list," said Sabina Herber, executive director of Wilmette Harbor, which has space for 290 boats. "It might take you 25 to 40 years to get a spot here for a big 35-foot powerboat."

Chicago's nine marinas have room for about 5,100 boats, and all are near capacity, said Scott Stevenson, vice president of Westrec Marina, a private company that contracts with the Chicago Park District to manage them.

"From a pure location standpoint, Evanston would seem to be a good place to build a marina," Stevenson said. "There are a lot of customers."

Officials acknowledge that getting funding for a marina would be difficult.

The city could be eligible for up to \$4 million from a fund that supports small boat harbors, said Roy Deda, project management deputy for the Corps of Engineers' Chicago district.

But in the 2003 budget, only \$11 million was available for the entire country, he said.

City officials said they anticipate resistance.

"There's opposition to anything involving a landfill," Bernstein said.

Some residents who live near the site already are organizing to voice their concerns about a marina's possible environmental impact on the lake and on their neighborhoods.

"I think it's clear this is not a good thing for the lake or for wildlife," said Ramona Meher, who lives in the 400 block of Sheridan Road.

A group of about dozen residents have organized to monitor the proposal, Meher said.

"We need to get vocal," she said.