

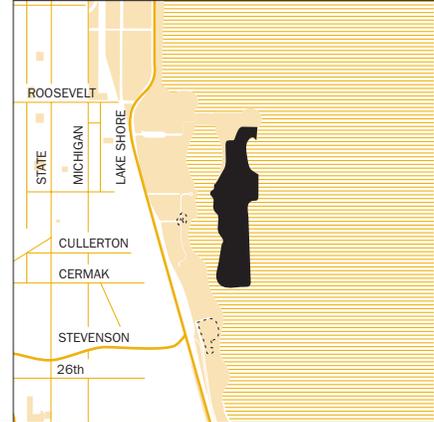
Daniel H. Burnham, in his seminal 1909 Plan of Chicago, called for the creation of a series of islands stretching between Grant and Jackson Parks and extending into Lake Michigan. Northerly Island was the only one to be developed. In 1933 and 1934, the island was expanded to accommodate part of the grounds for the World's Fair. "A Century of Progress" included tall, futuristic buildings made of what were then unconventional materials like plywood and masonite. (*AIA Guide to Chicago*, edited by Alice Sinkevitch.) In 1938, the bridge that connected the island was replaced with fill, creating a causeway that now makes the site a peninsula rather than an island. Beginning in 1947, and through the rest of the 20th century, Northerly Island was home to Merrill C. Meigs Field, a small airport. The airport's 50-year lease expired in 1996, and in 2003, the airport was closed. (Chicago Park District web site, 2004.)

In 2004, Northerly Island began its transformation back into parkland. Its design is still being worked out, but it's likely the site will retain an environmental focus as plans evolve. Twenty-four acres have already been drill-seeded with native prairie grasses and flowers.

Though this is an urban preserve with spectacular views of the city skyline, the landscape has the feel and function of a wide open grassland.

Even when Meigs Field was functioning as an airport, birders relied on Northerly Island as a place to find snowy owls in winter. Short-eared owls, horned larks, and snow buntings can also be found here, according to *Birder's Guide to the Chicago Region*. (Lynne Carpenter and Joel Greenberg, Northern Illinois Press, 1999.) American kestrels are present throughout the year, and killdeer are here in the summer.

NORTHERLY ISLAND



Northerly Island



ADDRESS 1300 S Lake Shore Drive
 OWNER Chicago Park District
 ACREAGE 82.74

HABITATS
1 Potential Habitat

DIRECTIONS Head east on the peninsula that has the Adler Planetarium at its tip; this is called Solidarity Drive. Park in the lots adjacent to the Visitor Center (former Airport Terminal Building). Like all lakefront sites, this is a good one to access by bike.