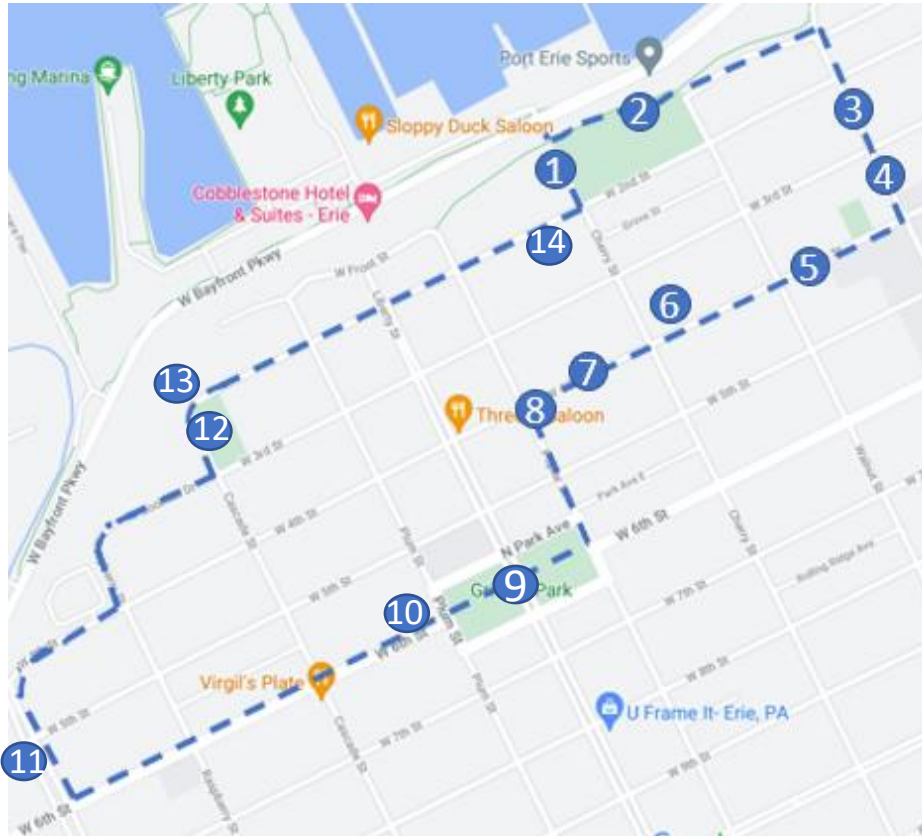




Special thanks to the Feeding Minds STEM Program, an outreach initiative through Gannon University that focuses on bringing quality STEM education to city youth, and Dr. Steven Ropski from Gannon University for collaborating on this environmental education walk!



## 1. Cottonwood Trees

Notice the three cottonwood trees across the street from the Erie County Health Department. Watch for “summer snow” in June when their fluffy seeds float to the ground. According to a local expert, one of these trees is approximately 130 years old and has a diameter of 14 feet!

**As you gaze toward Presque Isle, keep in mind that you are looking at the richest habitat in the entire state in terms of the number of rare plants and animals.**

## 2. Pollution

In the last century, the bay was severely polluted with excessive nutrients, heavy metals, and organic compounds. Thanks to decades of hard work, the bay was removed from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern in 2013. However, there is still much that can be done to further improve its habitat and water quality. The concrete running down the hill on the left side funnels stormwater runoff, and with it pollution, into Lake Erie. If it had green stormwater infrastructure that uses more permeable materials, there would be far less runoff and thus less pollution.

## 3. Residential Gardens

Notice the various residential gardens and flower beds. The development of the city obliterated much of the native biodiversity, but through people’s choice to plant many different types of flowers, shrubs, and trees in their gardens, natural diversity can be seen.

## 4. Streetscapes

There is a grassy strip between the street and the sidewalk on one side of the street, but on the other side, the entire area is covered in concrete. The grassy patch helps to capture and filter stormwater.

## 5. Abundant Trees

In addition to improving the neighborhood aesthetics, tree-lined streets reduce the urban heat island effect, which results from an abundance of concrete surfaces and buildings.

## 6. People’s Park

At the park you will notice that the picnic tables are made from durable recycled plastic, which is far preferable to sending plastic to the landfill. Also, these tables will not rot like regular wood.

## 7. Ravine

Observe a dip in the road between Cherry Street and Poplar Street. This is evidence of a small natural ravine that drained into the bay before the city was built.

## 8. Westerdahl Park

This “pocket park” is an excellent urban greenspace as it enhances the quality of the neighborhood. The large Butterfly Bush is a great place to observe butterflies; also, there is an assortment of small herbs.

## 9. Gridley Park

The abundant trees here provide habitat for animals, including squirrels and songbirds. Trees with shaggy bark provide roosting places for bats. At the second round garden, look up to observe a large deformed tree on the left. Tree burls are caused by stress as a result of an injury or an infection from fungi or viruses.

## 10. Wooden Shingles

As you walk west on 6th Street, watch for a house on the right that is sided with wooden shingles. This is another place where bats can roost.

## 11. Urban Woodlot

The urban woodlot on the left side of Cranberry Street has a canopy of cottonwood trees, with an understory of vines, including Virginia Creeper (5 leaflets) and Poison Ivy (3 leaflets). It is home to many small mammals.

## 12. Cascade Park

Check out the park on the east side of Cascade Street with the large open lawn; robins might be here searching for worms. On the opposite side of the street, the pine trees provide winter shelter for songbirds and pinecone seeds for squirrels and chipmunks. Owls like to roost in these evergreen trees.

## 13. Valley Overlooks and Wetlands

This is a great place to look for red-winged blackbirds as they fly among the open wetlands and reed grasses. Optional: you may want to walk along the Bayfront Promenade instead for part of this stretch.

## 14. The Health Department Pollinator Garden

Before you return to Bayview Park, check out the pollinator garden on the left side. There are many native flowers here that attract bees and other interesting insects. Most of the plants are labeled with signs. This neighborhood asset was installed just a few years ago.

# HEALTH CORNER: Dynamic Stretching Technique

**Dynamic Stretching** unlike static stretching, requires the use of continuous movement patterns that “mimic” the exercise, or, a specific sport movement to be performed.

Generally speaking, the purpose of dynamic stretching is to improve flexibility for a given sport or activity as a warm-up series prior to an event or training.



Want to learn more about the Feeding Minds STEM Program?

Check out their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/FeedingMindsSTEM>



Join in on West BayFit fun this summer! West BayFit combines fun and fitness with a variety of activities, fresh produce, and more. Participants can also get their COVID-19 vaccine.



Pictured above is the red-winged blackbird from stop 13 on the map

To get weekly updates and the self guided walks emailed to you, register through this link:  
<https://ourwestbayfront.org/event/wbf2021/>



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