

## **Hampton Beach State Park**

Hampton Beach State Park is one of 72 parks administered by the Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Parks and Recreation. This highly developed urban oceanfront park was acquired the mid-1930's and has received major capital investment over the years. Hampton Beach annually hosts over a million guests per year, with more than 100,000 enjoying this exceptional oceanfront park on sunny summer days. The Division of Parks and Recreation works collaboratively with the Town and business community to make Hampton Beach a premiere resort destination.

The park consists of three administrative areas; Seashell, South Beach and North Beach. The North Beach area is out of the scope of this project but it is defined as the east side of Ocean Boulevard, north of Great Boars Head to the intersection of High Street.

The South Beach area is what many park visitors would expect in a state park setting; centralized parking, picnic shelter, dunes, park store, bathrooms, RV campground and sandy beach. This site also hosts a park maintenance facility and administrative offices. While the parks are "never closed" services are provided to the public from May to late-October. Access from South Beach to the Seashell area is contiguous via the beach.

The Seashell area is defined as the east side of Route 1A, stretching from Haverhill Street, north to Great Boar's Head including the Ross Avenue toilet building and the parking lots in the center of Ocean Boulevard. The Seashell Complex was constructed in the 1960's and is the park administrative offices for the lifeguards, park patrol and maintenance sections. The site also hosts the Hampton Beach Area Chamber of Commerce's seasonal office. The Seashell Complex provides public services from April to November. In the peak season approximately, Memorial Day to Labor Day, the seashell complex is open 7:00 am to midnight. Concerts and other special events happen daily at the Seashell Stage. The Town of Hampton has an ordinance that closes the beach to public use at 1:00 am.

## **Project Description**

The 2001 *Hampton Beach Area Master Plan* recommended reducing the congestion at the central Seashell complex by spreading the public facilities out along the entire beach, and revitalizing the public use facilities. The scope of the project is limited to the State Park and does not extend to the westside of Ocean Boulevard. The new buildings incorporate a New England seashore aesthetic, with weathered shingles, stone bases, hip roofs, gables, a cupola, and wood trim. The facilities must be built to withstand the harsh seashore environment, hurricane forces, the everyday wear and tear from the many visitors to the site, and shall incorporate energy efficient and sustainable technologies in the buildings. The buildings incorporate a New England seashore aesthetic, with weathered shingles, stone bases, hip roofs, gables, a cupola, and wood trim.

## **South Beach Visitor Center**

The new South Beach Visitor Center (5,048 SF) will provide the gateway to Hampton Beach State Park. The Visitor Center is easily accessible from both north and south bound traffic along Ocean Boulevard. The new facility will contain visitor information desk, restrooms, seasonal and permanent exhibits devoted to area wildlife and history and a park store. Visitors will be able to register for the park campground, obtain regional information, and book reservations for lodging, meals, and other local attractions. A new site entry drive will be developed generally in the same location as the existing driveway (potentially including a turn lane and deceleration lane in the State Highway), and new parking facilities and associated drainage facilities will be constructed to accommodate park patrons at the Visitor Center. Site improvements in this area will be limited generally to the Ocean Boulevard frontage of the site – improvements to the existing parking area, RV camping area, and beachfront pavilions are not anticipated.

## **Seashell Complex**

The Seashell Complex will use a similar overall footprint and space allocation of the existing structure; main stage and two smaller pavilion buildings at the north and south ends. The new complex will support park administrative services and provide the primary visitor services including restrooms, first aid station, and visitor information. Two new smaller ancillary stages oriented to the beach will be located added. Replacing the existing flag tower will be a new iconic landmark for the center of Hampton Beach which will provide lighting for the stage and may house a cell phone tower as well as other equipment.

The new three story main stage (11,366 SF) will serve as the centerpiece of the Hampton Beach summer entertainment scene and provide additional administrative and visitor services. The entertainment area will provide dressing rooms, backstage areas, flexible seating for up to 750 people and utilize state of the art sound and lighting equipment. Visitor services include restrooms, first aid station and a second floor beach view conference room. The third floor contains the park's lifeguard offices and watch station.

The South Pavilion (4,366 SF) will offer restrooms and a Visitor's Information Center at the ground level. The second floor contains offices for event and outreach managers as well as a small conference room. Reconfiguring an existing small parking area adjacent to the South Pavilion will serve as short term parking for the Visitor's Information Center. The North Pavilion (4,366 SF) will provide storage and support space for park operations, park office space and employee restrooms and an employee lounge.

## **Haverhill Street Bath House and Marine Memorial Bath House**

The new Haverhill Street Bath House (1,966 SF) and the Marine Memorial Bath House (1,966 SF) will offer changing rooms, toilets, outdoor showers, coin-operated lockers, and bike racks. At the Haverhill Street Bath House the boardwalk will be widened to create a pedestrian plaza with shaded structures, seating, and easy handicap access to the beach. The Marine Memorial Bath House area will require seawall upgrades to link the bath house and memorial to create a pocket park.

## **Site Improvements**

Site improvements will separate parking areas from the board walk and channel the pedestrian traffic to formalized crossing areas. Shaded seating areas located regularly along the boardwalk will provide a place for all enjoy the ocean and the beach, while seeking shelter from the sun. A new landscaped median at the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Ashworth Avenue will serve as a pedestrian refuge island as a part of the improved pedestrian crossing.

In order to accommodate the new facilities, existing parking areas along the beach between Ocean Boulevard and the boardwalk will be reconfigured to create a more efficient parking layout and drop-off areas. New drainage facilities and water quality treatment measures (infiltration chambers) will be installed. In addition, modifications to the seawall adjacent to the sites of the bathhouses and the Sea Shell facility are needed to provide building areas for the facilities, and to enhance handicap and emergency vehicle access to the beach. Work is envisioned to be confined to the area from the easterly curb line of Ocean Boulevard to the seawall, with the exception of the crosswalk and island areas referenced above.