



DETROIT RIVERFRONT CONSERVANCY

Issue 18 • Quarter 4 • 2022



A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



We will remember 2022 as a year of many successes and as a special moment in the history of the Detroit Riverfront. Our progress this year has brought us close to completing our vision for the East Riverfront. And we have made great progress on expanding our connections into the neighborhoods, which will make it easier for Detroit residents to come to the riverfront and enjoy the parks and trails we have built.

The transformation of the riverfront illustrates what our community can accomplish when we rally behind a common vision. Our team has pushed every day for the last 20 years to turn the riverfront from one of the most blighted parts of our city into one of our most-beloved gathering places.

And I know that you were all proud when USA Today declared us the Best Riverwalk in the U.S. for the second year in-a-row.

We had many special moments on the riverfront this year that are worth noting.

Earlier this year, we broke ground on two transformational projects: the Southwest Greenway and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. We are thrilled by the community enthusiasm for these projects, and we can't wait to celebrate the opening of the Southwest Greenway in 2023 and the opening of Ralph Wilson Park in 2024. Our team has also continued to make progress on the Riverwalk connection from Mt. Elliott Park to the Belle Isle Bridge, which will complete our vision for the East Riverfront.

All told, 2022 has been the busiest year of construction in the history of the Conservancy.

This fall, Soirée on the Greenway raised more than \$160,000 for our organization. Also, we hosted more than 55,000 friends at our Detroit Harvest Fest & Food Truck Rally. The word around town is that Detroit Harvest Fest is becoming the must-attend fall event for people all throughout Metro Detroit.

In 2023, we will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Detroit Riverfront

Conservancy. And we are making plans to celebrate this tremendous milestone with all of you.

We are looking forward to a year of special events, programs, community celebrations recognizing the completion of the East Riverfront and celebrating the amazing leaders who came together to turn this vision into a reality.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our many supporters who have generously and selflessly given to us this year. Thank you. We couldn't do it without you.

I was fortunate to meet many new friends along the riverfront this year, and I look forward to meeting many new ones, as well as seeing old friends during our anniversary year of 2023.

Happy Holidays and I look forward to celebrating with you in the New Year.

Matthew P. Cullen
Chairman



THE RETURN OF SOIRÉE ON

This year, Soirée on the Greenway, presented by Citizens, returned to the riverfront after a two-year hiatus, and broke our previous records. Attendance was almost doubled, and the Conservancy raised over \$160,000 to support our vision. Every dollar raised went towards ensuring the Riverwalk and associated parks and greenways continue to be safe and beautiful spaces for everyone to enjoy.

For the first time ever, this year's Soirée served as a preview to the Detroit Harvest Fest & Food Truck Rally and featured delicious eats from 10 of the best food trucks from Harvest Fest 2021.

Once again, guests embraced the masquerade theme and came out dressed to impress with ornate costumes and masks. The event included daring circus performances from the Motley Misfits, fortune tellers,

a carnival arcade, pedal-powered animal bikes, and an unforgettable live performance from the Aston Neighborhood Pleasure Club's Bizarre Orchestra.

A highlight of the magical evening was the unveiling of a new mural on the Dequindre Cut. The new mural was created by Ivan Montoya, a Detroit-based painter and muralist who utilizes motifs from folklore and the natural world to illustrate the





THE GREENWAY



experience of living between cultures. His vibrant and dynamic work is a stunning addition to the art on the Cut and was made possible thanks to the Soirée Music and Arts sponsor, the Coca-Cola Company.

Soirée on the Greenway 2022 was a resounding success, and we look forward to continuing the festive tradition for many years to come!





THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE

Construction crews continued to make significant progress this fall on several projects that will transform the East Riverfront and the West Riverfront for generations to come.

Uniroyal

Crews on the Uniroyal property are very close to completing this final piece of the East Riverfront. The team is working to finalize grading of the site, and will finish pouring the concrete path in early 2023. The iconic marine railing along the river's edge will be complete this year. And in the spring, colorful decorative concrete will be installed followed by installation of site furnishings and landscaping. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy looks forward to celebrating the grand opening of the Uniroyal Promenade in the summer.

DDA Parcel

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has completed repairs along the seawall along this property, which is located between Riverfront Towers and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park on the West Riverfront.

Work will begin next spring and will be complete by early 2024. This section of Riverwalk will include a plaza with tiered seating, three peaceful rain gardens, marine railing, lighting, security cameras, and beautiful landscaping.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park

Our team has been busy since June building Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. All site demolition on the 22-acre property has been completed and significant site grading has been done. Currently, crews are pouring the foundations for the William Davidson Sport House and will begin placing the concrete walls this month while coordinating mechanical and electrical installations. Structural steel is expected to arrive in February followed by a custom skylight.

Next month, the marine contractor will begin stabilizing the water garden area and will begin demolition of sections of the seawall.

Ralph Wilson Park will feature basketball courts at the William Davidson Sport House, a large water garden, the Delta Dental Play Garden, and the expansive DTE Foundation Hill. The park will be complete in 2024.





RIVERFRONT CONTINUES

Southwest Greenway

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy and Michigan Central hosted a sneak peek of the Southwest Greenway in mid-November so members of the community could catch a glimpse of the greenway before it is complete and opens to the public this winter. More than 500 people attended the event and enjoyed free hot chocolate, tacos, churros and other refreshments. Guests were also able to see the Bagley Mobility Hub and learn about the transformation of the train station and the new mobility innovation district from members of the Michigan Central team.

The Southwest Greenway runs from Bagley Street to West Jefferson. It connects the riverfront with the Corktown, Hubbard-Richard and Southwest Detroit neighborhoods.

In the coming weeks, the last of the concrete pathway will be poured along the greenway. Fencing, lighting and subsurface drainage will be completed over the coming months. Final landscaping will be completed in the spring. While the greenway will open for public use later this winter, the grand opening will be celebrated in spring 2023.





2022 Programming Highlights **ON THE RIVERFRONT**

It was another year of fantastic programming along the Detroit Riverfront in 2022. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy had the pleasure of bringing back some of the community's favorite events, as well as adding to the repertoire of fun.

Once again this summer, Reading and Rhythm on the Riverfront (R3) was one of the most popular programs offered by the Conservancy. More than 2,500 kids and their families visited Gabriel Richard Park for R3 this summer. In addition to discovering the joys of reading, all children left each session with a free book. Another highlight of the R3 season was the return of books being read to participants by local celebrity guests from throughout the community, which included Detroit City Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero.



The Detroit Riverwalkers also returned to the Riverwalk after a two-year hiatus. The Conservancy was excited to welcome over 2,000 older adults to gather on the riverfront and enjoy some exercise outdoors. AARP of Michigan provided fitness classes, meetings with doctors, and giveaways.

In addition, the Conservancy hosted many mental health-focused events for all people from all walks of life. Popular events in the series included Rise Together and Riverfront Reflections. Hosted by Afro Moone, Rise Together featured a guided sunrise meditation at Gabriel Richard Park to bring people together and help take care of their mental well-being.

The focus of Riverfront Reflections was to help visitors practice nature-based mindfulness to reduce stress and promote well-being. The Conservancy provided audio-guided mindful practices, as well as a QR code scavenger hunt to encourage visitors to experience the Riverwalk in a mindful and connected way.

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy hosted the Detroit Harvest Fest & Food Truck Rally in early October along the Dequindre Cut Greenway. The second-annual event drew more than 55,000 people. Guests enjoyed food from 50 food trucks and more than 75 music and other performances across six stages. The event also featured trick or treating, a free pumpkin patch, petting zoo, hands-on activities, inflatable bounce houses and more for the kids.

Don't forget to check our website to learn about programs and special events along the riverfront. Visit detroitriverfront.org/things-to-do





LOOKING FORWARD: WINTER AT VALADE



The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is excited to bring back Winter at Valade for the third year this season.

As the riverfront's go-to destination for family-friendly winter programming, Valade Park will be the home for a full season of weekend activities, including four special themed weekends. Every weekend beginning December 9 through February 26 (except Christmas and New Year's Eve weekends), visitors can stop by the park to enjoy hot or seasonal beverages, like hot chocolate, cider and Hot Toddies, as well as taste some incredible food from Smokey G's BBQ and Geisha Girls Sushi. There will also be oversized outdoor fireplaces, marshmallow roasting, synthetic ice curling, box hockey, free sled rentals at the Sled Shed and other outdoor games.

The four special weekends of themed programming at Valade Park will include Fire and Ice, Winter Around the World, Motown Love, and Mardi Gras at Valade. During those special weekends, guests can enjoy live music, ice sculptures, global cuisine, special activities, live performances and more. Stop by Valade Park for family-friendly fun all winter long!



WINTER FUN EVERY WEEKEND DECEMBER 8 - FEBRUARY 26

Fri 4-9pm | Sat 12-9pm | Sun 12-7pm

- Giant Fires
- Hot Seasonal Drinks
- Sledding
- Marshmallow Roasters
- Winter Games
- Free Weekly Activities

SPECIAL EVENT WEEKENDS

Fri 4-9pm | Sat 12-9pm | Sun 12-7pm

Fire & Ice Festival | Jan 6-8

Winter Around the World | Jan 20-22

Motown Love | Feb 3-5

Mardi Gras at Valade | Feb 17-19





Honoring the Legacy of **MORT HARRIS**

The Mort and Brigitte Harris Foundation has generously pledged \$1.5 million to establish an outdoor classroom at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The Mort Harris Classroom will both honor his legacy and serve as a special place of learning and inspiration for generations to come.

Mort, who passed away in May of 2021 at the age of 101, was a heroic WWII veteran, philanthropist, and co-founder of American Axle & Manufacturing, Inc. He was a native-born Detroiters who viewed the Detroit

Riverfront as an incredible asset to the city. This gift continues a legacy of support stretching back more than a decade to 2012 when Mort made a gift of \$100,000 to establish the Brigitte Harris Gardens at Cullen Plaza as a birthday gift to his wife, who was a gardening enthusiast.

Faced with not having many opportunities as a young man, Mort believed that education was vital. He gave to many educational causes throughout Detroit and the metropolitan area, and also ensured that his children were educated to the best of his and their abilities.

“He loved Detroit and the metropolitan area and wanted to bring it back to its greatness,” said Stuart Harris, Mort’s son. “He felt that education was one of the keys to doing that and he would have really wanted to see reading as a basis for positive change.”

“Mort wanted people to be able to pull themselves up,” said Michele Becker, Mort’s daughter. “He really made sure that is where his focus was. He was also really driven by the City of Detroit. He made his life in Detroit. He loved Detroit. He believed in Detroit.”

“He loved Detroit and the metropolitan area and wanted to bring it back to its greatness. He felt that education was one of the keys to doing that and he would have really wanted to see reading as a basis for positive change.”

– Stuart Harris, son of Mort Harris

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will be a 22-acre attraction unlike any other destination in the world. In addition to the Mort Harris Classroom, the park will include basketball courts at the William Davidson Sport House, and other amenities, including a large water garden, the Delta Dental Play Garden, and the expansive DTE Foundation Hill.

Upon completion of the park and the outdoor classroom in 2024, Mort’s family, including his six children and many grandchildren who are currently spread across the country, intend to return to Detroit in remembrance of Mort’s legacy and love for the city.

“Thinking about the outdoor classroom, it’s what he would want,” said Stuart. “It’s his achievement and we are all very happy to see this happen.”



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: TANISHA BRONAUGH

A Detroit native, Tanisha Bronaugh teaches high school students at Detroit Public Schools. In the fall of 2021, she signed up to help with Detroit Harvest Fest & Food Truck Rally while looking for volunteer opportunities for her and her students. Shortly after, Tanisha completed onboarding to become a Detroit Riverfront Conservancy volunteer and has since served a total of 123 hours as an ambassador and at various riverfront events.

Prior to becoming a volunteer, Tanisha would visit the riverfront with her two kids to participate in programming and activities, but never knew that the Conservancy and its system of volunteers were behind them. Looking back, she says she didn't know just how much was going on until she was a part of making it happen. Given all of the memories the riverfront has helped her and her family make, volunteering is something she is happy to do.

"These are activities we like," Tanisha said. "And we want to participate to help ensure they keep happening," she said.

"These are activities we like and we want to participate to help ensure they keep happening."

- Tanisha Bronaugh

Tanisha enjoys meeting new people and getting involved with her community through volunteering. To her, the riverfront is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together, placing the Conservancy's mission of developing five-and-a-half miles of riverfront close to her heart.

"I see that the Conservancy is connecting the riverfront and I can't wait until it is all connected and done," she said. "They are really invested in the community and I love it. The Conservancy team really does listen to what the residents want and they put it into action."

For those who may be considering volunteering with the Conservancy, Tanisha offers this advice: "I would say do it, because I guarantee you'll see there are a lot more things going on in the city than you would ever know - and it's a good time, too!"

To learn more and apply, visit www.detroitriverfront.org/volunteers or call **(313) 566-8207**.



SUPPORTING YOUR DETROIT RIVERFRONT CONSERVANCY

It's been a fun, memorable and exciting year along the riverfront, and those of us at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy feel like there's a lot to be grateful for in 2022.

We are incredibly humbled to be the perpetual stewards of these riverfront public spaces that mean so much to our community. Additionally, we are thrilled that more than 400,000 people enjoyed our special events and programs this year. In total, we estimate more than three million people visited the riverfront this year.

Our mission of building and maintaining public spaces that are clean, safe, accessible and engaging is something we take seriously. As a non-profit organization, we are also responsible for raising funds to maintain the Riverwalk, Dequindre Cut, and our four parks. Every year we are very fortunate to receive a lot of support from the community and we are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported us this year. During this giving season, please consider making a gift in support of our efforts.

Thank you all for your support during 2022. We look forward to seeing you next year as the Conservancy celebrates its 20th Anniversary. We have a lot of exciting things planned to celebrate this milestone with all of you.

Happy Holidays!

There are many ways to support the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

- Make a one-time donation or become a Monthly Sustainer
- Learn about your employer's matching gift program
- Become a member and receive exclusive benefits
- Purchase an engraved brick or paver, underwrite a commemorative bench or make an honorary gift for a loved one
- Support the Conservancy at its fundraising events

Visit detroitriverfront.org/waystohelp

We believe without question that our community is the most generous and supportive anywhere in the nation. We could not have achieved the great successes we have if it were not for each and every one of you. Your continued support is pivotal to our success, please consider making a gift to support our efforts today. Thank you! www.detroitriverfront.org/give/2022_NL4

About the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 with the mission to develop public access to Detroit's riverfront and to serve as an anchor for economic development. As the permanent stewards of the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut, the Conservancy is responsible for raising the funds needed for construction, operation, maintenance, security and programming of the public spaces located along the riverfront. The Conservancy's ultimate vision is to develop five-and-a-half miles of riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge on the west to Gabriel Richard Park, just east of the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle. Visit www.detroitriverfront.org for more information.





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CONSERVANCY**

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