



Issue 26 / Q1 / 2025



A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we embark on what promises to be one of the most exciting years ever on the Detroit Riverfront, I am filled with optimism and gratitude entering my first full year leading the organization. Last year brought more than its fair share of challenges, and while we continue to feel the impact of those challenges, we are more committed than ever to creating proactive, positive change in 2025.

One of the most exciting and anticipated developments happening this year is the grand opening of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park in October. This transformative 22-acre space is the result of years of hard work, innovation, dedication and community input.

As we continue to grow, our commitment to keeping the Detroit Riverfront safe, clean, beautiful, and accessible remains at the forefront of everything we do. Whether it's enhancing or expanding our physical spaces, fostering engaging programming, or ensuring that the riverfront is a welcoming place for everyone, we remain dedicated to our founding mission each and every day.

In the spirit of community engagement, I am personally taking on a *1,000 Miles of Movement Challenge* on the Detroit Riverfront this year. This initiative is a chance for me to spend more time in our spaces, connect with members of our community, and take in the beauty of the riverfront firsthand. I would love for you to join me—whether it's for a run, walk, bike ride or meetup. If you're interested in participating, please feel free to email me and we'll set something up: 1KChallenge@detroitriverfront.org

This year is already off to a successful start, with a full and exciting season of Winter at Valade under our belts. Our programming team is working hard to bring you exciting new partnerships and reimagined favorites throughout the year, leading up to the grand opening of our new park in October. We can't wait to share all of these opportunities with you as we continue to build a riverfront that reflects the heart and spirit of Detroit.

Thank you for your continued support, and I'm looking forward to seeing you out on the Detroit Riverfront in 2025!

Warm regards,



Ryan Sullivan
CEO, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy



RALPH C. WILSON, JR. CENTENNIAL PARK

COMMUNITY ADVISORY TEAM

When the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy set out to transform the 22-acre West Riverfront Park into the world-class Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park, it was essential that the needs and desires of the community were at the forefront of the planning and design process. To achieve this level of community engagement, the Community Advisory Team (CAT) was assembled in 2017 and continues to be involved today. The team that was assembled reflects the diversity of Detroit, including people from across the city, ranging in age and ethnicity but with one common goal – to help make Ralph Wilson Park a place for Detroiters and by Detroiters – a true gem along the Detroit Riverfront for generations to come.

Currently under construction, Ralph Wilson Park will open to the public in October of this year. Stay tuned for grand opening information on our website, our social media channels and in our newsletters and emails. To subscribe to email updates about the park and other Detroit Riverfront Conservancy news, scan the QR code below.



Learn more by visiting
<https://bit.ly/4h40sYx>



CAT Member Spotlight Meet Denise – Member since 2017

As the founder and former president of Princeton Street Block Club, a City of Detroit Community Ambassador and a member of the Community Leadership Committee at University of Detroit Mercy, Denise has deep ties to the Detroit community and is actively involved in many local initiatives.

When former Executive Director of the Community Development Advocates of Detroit recommend she apply to be a member of the Conservancy's Community Advisory Team, it seemed like a natural fit.

Denise explains, "Community engagement means so much to me because I strongly believe that nothing should be done without the care, concerns and voices of the community – they have a vested interest and know what is best for their community."

Denise takes great pride in the significant influence the CAT members had on the park's design. She's particularly excited to see children enjoying the Delta Dental Play Garden, especially as they slide down the giant bear.

Reflecting on her lasting impact on Ralph Wilson Park and its broader influence on Detroit, Denise is proud of her long-term involvement. "My resilience to stay involved with the development of the park will change not only the riverfront, but Detroit – bringing people together from across metro Detroit and all over the world."

CAT Member Spotlight Meet John – Member since 2017

A lifelong Detroiters with deep roots in the community, John has spent much of his life enjoying the Detroit Riverfront with his family.

John became involved in the planning process for Ralph Wilson Park in 2017 after recovering from a cardiac arrest. A friend working at DTE encouraged him to apply for the Community Advisory Team, and after being selected, he began contributing to the park's development. For John, he says this level of community engagement means being fully invested in a project, "as if I were an owner."

CAT members had the opportunity to visit multiple urban parks across the country, and John recalled his visit to Chicago as part of the community feedback process. While in Chicago, John said "everywhere we went we looked at the pros and cons and brought back our findings. It was so helpful in making Ralph Wilson Park a destination, not just a park."

John is particularly passionate about green spaces and their role in improving quality of life, especially in densely populated areas like Detroit. "The riverfront is a classic example. It's packed with a lot of people daily, with everyone enjoying the parks and riverfront setting." He believes the riverfront exemplifies how green spaces bring people together and enhance community well-being.

When asked what he sees as his personal legacy to this project, he says it's his contribution to a part of Detroit that will benefit generations to come, from his grandchildren to their children and beyond.



SPRING PROGRAMMING PREVIEW

It's springtime on the Detroit Riverfront and we're gearing up for a full season of community programming. We're bringing back some familiar favorites along with new partners and reimagined experiences for visitors of all ages, interests and activity levels. Check out these upcoming programs and visit our website for a full calendar of events.



Riverfront Fish Fest: Sturgeon Day & Kids Fishing Fest May 3 – Milliken State Park and Harbor

Join us for an exciting, fun-filled day on the Detroit Riverfront as we bring together two beloved events into one spectacular experience: Sturgeon Day & Kids Fishing Fest! This family-friendly event is the perfect opportunity to explore the wonders of wildlife and conservation while also diving into the world of fishing.

Get up close and personal with live sturgeon, touch these majestic creatures, and learn all about their fascinating lives and the vital conservation efforts to protect them.

Whether you're a seasoned angler or just learning the ropes, our Kids Fishing Fest is the perfect place to cast a line into the Detroit River, try your hand at fishing, and enjoy a fun day on the water with family and friends.

Detroit Riverfront Run June 7 – Cullen Plaza 5K & 10K Run or Walk

Whether you're an experienced runner or just looking for a fun way to stay active, the Detroit Riverfront Run offers the perfect chance to experience stunning views of the river while challenging yourself to go the distance.

Sign up for the 5K or 10K run/walk and receive a custom t-shirt and a commemorative medal to celebrate your achievement. Sign up today and make this run one for the books! Register today and use code DETROIT to receive \$5 off. More information and registration at detroitriverfrontrun.com



Juneteenth Celebration with Juneteenth Jubilee June 21 – Valade Park

Celebrate freedom, community, and wellness at the Juneteenth Celebration on the Detroit Riverfront, in partnership with Juneteenth Jubilee! This vibrant event will honor the rich history and culture of Juneteenth with a health and wellness twist.

Join us for an inspiring day filled with live entertainment, engaging partner stations, and exciting wellness activations designed to uplift both body and mind.

Savor delicious food and drinks, explore wellness resources, and connect with others as we come together along the beautiful Detroit River.



Learn more by visiting
DetroitRiverfront.org/Things-to-do



SHIMMER ON THE RIVER

June 26, 2025 | Robert C. Valade Park

Kick off summer in style at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's signature annual fundraiser, Shimmer on the River, hosted at Robert C. Valade Park. This festive evening will be filled with all-ages fun, featuring live music, a Riverfront Boardwalk lined with summer activities, a family-friendly Adventure Park, a Kids Dance Party on Valade Beach, delicious food and refreshments, and more!

Your support will help maintain the beauty, safety, and accessibility of the Detroit Riverwalk and surrounding parks and greenways, ensuring they remain world-class gathering spaces for all. Funds raised will directly benefit the ongoing improvements, operations, maintenance, security, and programming of these cherished parks.

Join us for this unforgettable evening on the Best Riverwalk in the USA!



JOIN US AS A SHIMMER ON THE RIVER SPONSOR

Your support will benefit the continued development and stewardship of the Detroit Riverfront for generations to come.

Champion of the Conservancy | \$10,000

- Acknowledgement as Champion of the Conservancy
- Dedicated signage at Shimmer
- 12 VIP tickets and a private chalet

Riverwalk Partner | \$5,000

- 8 VIP Tickets

Shimmer Partner | \$2,500

- 6 VIP Tickets

All Shimmer Partners Receive

- Recognition on DRFC website, in press release(s), and on promotional materials
- Inclusion in eblasts (43k+ subscribers)
- Social media recognition (160k+ followers)
- Listing on sponsor signage at Shimmer
- VIP tickets, each allowing free admission for up to two children

Visit detroitriverfront.org/shimmer to learn more and support the event!



Learn more by visiting
DetroitRiverfront.org/Shimmer



SUPPORT THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT WITH CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy welcomes volunteer groups year-round to assist with specialized projects along the riverfront. In 2024, as a way of enhancing our corporate volunteer partnerships, the Conservancy introduced its DRFC Corporate Champion and DRFC Corporate Steward group volunteer packages. We had multiple groups join us last year for various cleanup and beautification projects that not only benefited the Detroit community, but also provided unique team-building opportunities for employees from organizations across Metro Detroit.

Some sample projects available to our Corporate Champions and Corporate Stewards include Rivertown neighborhood cleanups, picnic table building, Dequindre Cut Freight Yard beautification, event composting and recycling, invasive species removal and visitor survey distribution.



Learn more by visiting
[DetroitRiverfront.org/GroupVolunteering](https://detroitriverfront.org/GroupVolunteering)

THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

DRFC VOLUNTEER PROGRAM SPONSOR



CORPORATE CHAMPIONS

Cohen & Co[®]

Rivertown Neighborhood Cleanup
23 Volunteers
57 Hours Contributed
441 Pounds of Litter Collected



Rivertown Neighborhood Cleanup
26 Volunteers
78 Hours Contributed
460 Pounds of Litter Collected

CORPORATE STEWARDS



Dequindre Cut Freight Yard Beautification
14 Volunteers
42 Hours Contributed
Painting, cleaning and beautifying the Freight Yard



Rivertown Neighborhood Cleanup
8 Volunteers
12 Hours Contributed
387 Pounds of Litter Collected



2024 VISITOR SURVEY RESULTS

Each year, visitors to the Detroit Riverfront have the opportunity to participate in a visitor experience survey while out and about on the Riverwalk, parks or greenways.

This year, thousands of people provided feedback by scanning QR codes that were placed along the riverfront on flyers, signs, stickers and banners. The information gathered helps us better understand how the community experiences the Detroit Riverfront and provides valuable insights into ways our programming and operations can be improved.

One of the highlights from this year's survey was an impressive 99% overall satisfaction rating, with nearly all of our respondents saying they would visit again and recommend the Detroit Riverfront as a must-see destination in Detroit. We also saw an impressive 100% representation of all Detroit zip codes, while also welcoming visitors from more than 105 zip codes across the country.

Even with such positive feedback, we remain committed to listening to the community and using their input to guide us as we move forward into 2025.

"The Detroit Riverfront is a huge part of our life! So many options to enjoy—parks, biking, food, bringing friends along to enjoy the views and beauty of nature within a city setting! Love it all!"



1,543

Total Responses

100%

Detroit Zip Codes Represented

99.3%

Respondents would recommend the Detroit Riverfront as a destination to visit in Detroit

More than

50%

Respondents visited more than a few times a month



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