

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

[Will the DDA parcel on the West Riverwalk be enhanced & more visually appealing?](#)

Yes. There will be improvements to the property, which is located between Riverfront Towers and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

[What will be happening with the DDA parcel that is between Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park and Riverfront Towers?](#)

The Conservancy will build a Riverwalk connection across the DDA parcel which will allow visitors to access Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

[That Southwest Greenway "before" photo is what the Dequindre Cut looked like before its current renovation.](#)

Yes, it currently looks very similar to the Cut before its transformation. The greenway will be open for use next year. The Conservancy is excited to bring this connection to the community.

[Happy to see an intentional effort to manage storm water and provide important co-benefits of natural spaces!! Two thumbs up!](#)

Thank you. The Conservancy wants to make sure we have good examples of natural ways to manage storm water.

[What happened to the May Creek name?](#)

The Conservancy feels that "Southwest Greenway" is a name that is more reflective of its purpose and the community that the greenway serves. It is still a working name, so it could change as the project moves forward.

[Will there be handicapped parking anywhere near the parks?](#)

Yes. There will be a number of accessible parking stalls along West Jefferson and along the extension of Rosa Parks for access to Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. There are also plans for ADA parking stalls at a few sites along the Joe Louis Greenway.

[1. Porta potties/bathroom facilities??](#)

[2. I am concerned that only one bathroom hub will be available along the SW Greenway. I suspect there will be a lot of pedestrian activity in this area.](#)

Southwest Greenway restroom facilities will be located at both ends, at the Bagley entrance and at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The Ford Mobility Hub at 14th and Bagley will have restrooms. The park will have facilities at the Park House and at both the east and west end comfort stations as well. On the Joe Louis Greenway, long term plans call for restroom locations at Warren and River, as well as Joy and Grand River.

[Glad to see the timeline and when it will open! As someone who enjoys the Dequindre Cut now, I look forward to being an early bicycle rider on the southwest extension of our riverfront access.](#)

The Conservancy team is happy to bring this project to the community and looks forward to opening next year.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

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April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

Any plans for a greenway connection to Fort Wayne?

The Joe Louis Greenway will connect to Fort Wayne via the Gordie Howe Bridge pathways. It will connect to Fort Wayne at Jefferson via a shared-use path. The map can be found at www.joelouisgreenway.com

What is the expected completion date of the Uniroyal connection to Belle Isle?

The Riverwalk extension along the Uniroyal property is expected to be complete in 2022.

When will work begin on the West Riverfront extension & the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park?

Crews are beginning seawall repairs along the property just west of Riverfront Towers in the coming months. The Conservancy plans to break ground on Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park in fall 2021.

Will there be substantial bicycle parking options at various sites or more than just a few areas to lock a bike up?

There will be numerous areas throughout Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park to secure bicycles.

Will the portion of the Joe Louis Greenway on Bagley west of the Southwest Greenway eventually be receiving bike lanes?

There will be bike lanes from 16th Street to 21st Street. Community meetings will be held to confirm the final design. Please follow www.joelouisgreenway.com or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/JoeLouisGreenway> to learn about upcoming public meetings.

Is the parking structure near the old Joe Louis Arena site going to be open soon?

The Conservancy has not heard anything formally about the future of the parking structure.

Will there be water stations along the way?

There will be bottle fillers throughout Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. As for the Southwest Greenway, since the greenway is all below ground, it won't work structurally to bring water below grade. The City is planning for water stations along Joe Louis Greenway at the Warren trailhead and near Grand River.

1. The steel arches that were presented seem pretty harsh and industrial. I understand the whole gritty Detroit vibe but living here every day I would love to have a break from the harsh steel forms we have around us and enjoy more organic shapes.

2. To contort my comment above into a question: will there be an opportunity to tweak the aesthetic of the greenway to be more organic?

The arches along the entrance to the rail tunnel are located along a short length of the experience. The Southwest Greenway in this area is very narrow, and it's right where the train tracks pop out. The design is intentional, to create a compression/expansion experience at this location, which will highlight the approach to the train station.

I believe there was some effort to work with Friends of the Detroit River to incorporate some habitat restoration project(s) as part of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. Is this a possibility or being considered? Normally it includes remediation of sediment along the river which would be great in addition to the habitat benefit.

Yes, the Conservancy will be working with the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the sediment.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

How will users on wheels be separated from pedestrians on the Joe Louis Greenway?

There are designated paths for bikes, pedestrians and aggregate paths for runners. Bikes and pedestrians will be on two separate concrete paths divided by a landscaped median. There will be a running path along either side of the bike path composed of aggregate. You can see an image of this at www.joelouisgreenway.com.

1. Will there be any dog parks or areas for dogs to play off leash in the parks?
2. Will the new park be dog friendly?
3. Is the Conservancy not dog friendly?

Per the City of Detroit ordinance, dogs must be leashed at all times along the riverfront. Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will not have an off-leash dog park area. The closest dog parks will be located at Riverside Park, about a mile away, and at Roosevelt Park, which will be connected through the Southwest Greenway.

Will there be any nods to the historic May Creek along the Southwest Greenway?

It's important for the Conservancy to continue to tell the story of these sites. The Conservancy will investigate ways to acknowledge the history of May Creek.

Are you allowing electric skateboards on the greenway?

The Conservancy is in talks with all four mobility scooter companies. The Conservancy feels mobility is important in the city and that scooters are a great way to connect the community to the riverfront. Scooters will be allowed on the greenways. For safety purposes, the greenways will be geo-fenced as 'low speed zones' therefore, scooter speed will be greatly reduced while in these areas.

Do you anticipate any opportunities for art that the community adjacent will have input on to further beautify and represent the community along the greenway?

Similarly to the Dequindre Cut, the Conservancy will work with local artists to provide murals and art installations.

Will bike riders on Joe Louis Greenway need passports when they meet checkpoints connecting with Windsor?

Both bicyclists and pedestrians using the new Gordie Howe International Bridge will need to provide passports in order to cross into Windsor.

Are there any plans to connect non-car transit options to the parks/trails?

The Conservancy has been talking with DDOT about a bus stop on Jefferson to support Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

Will more eating and drinking options be available along these new features and along the Riverwalk?

There will be a café at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. As the greenways are completed and become more popular with visitors, we expect that businesses will open near the park and greenway.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

1. What ideas are there for food/eating options?

2. Will there be food vendors in the park and other proposed new areas?

There will be a café located in the Park House at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The Conservancy is also working on the food program at the park to be complimentary to other spaces, including Cullen Plaza, Robert C. Valade Park and Dequindre Cut Freight Yard.

Do you have a start date?

Work will begin on the Southwest Greenway this summer.

In the two greenways discussed, will there be "Freight Yard" areas developed?

The City of Detroit is not planning a "Freight Yard" along Phase 1 of the Joe Louis Greenway but, there is a community group that is considering constructing something similar to the "Freight Yard." Please email joelouisgreenway@detroitmi.gov if you would like to help develop the community-run "Freight Yard." The City is rehabilitating an existing commercial building on Grand River for future retail.

There are no plans for a "Freight Yard" experience along the Southwest Greenway because of its length and proximity to great retail, food, and beverage locations in Corktown and Mexicantown.

What will be the security arrangements along the Southwest and Joe Louis Greenways?

The City will hold two community meetings in early May about security arrangements for the Joe Louis Greenway. Please follow www.joelouisgreenway.com and/or <https://www.facebook.com/JoeLouisGreenway> to learn about upcoming meetings.

The Conservancy will manage security for the Southwest Greenway. There will be cameras and mobile security patrols along the greenway.

If we are going to interact with water, are there any plans for a water taxi that can make stops at Historic Fort Wayne, Belle Isle, etc.?

Think about water taxis like Chicago to generate tourist income.

In 2014, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy led a study on creating a water taxi system that would connect Belle Isle and popular riverfront parks. Based on the modeling and infrastructure needs, it's not currently possible, but at some point, it could become a reality when funding and vessels can be secured.

Right now, semi-trucks park along Jefferson, will there be appropriate parking?

Long-term semi-parking has been moved to an off-site location. Currently, trucks park for short durations while waiting to enter the postal service building.

Will there be handicap accessible playground equipment? Are there plans for an inclusive playground similar to Scarlet's Smile Playground in Commerce Township?

The first phase of the Joe Louis Greenway will have an accessible playground at the Warren trailhead. The Delta Dental Play Garden at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will have numerous areas that will be accommodating for people with different physical abilities.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

1. Art Sculptures? It looks good but what happened to the art element? Detroit is known for art and music! What about a stage?

2. Interactive art! Like Chicago for children and adults

Interactive art and art that reflects the community, public education opportunities, all are possible. With art, you don't need to build it all in time for day one, the greenway is a great canvas, and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park has lots of space for art. The Conservancy plans to build an art program over time, as the landscapes mature. The Hill at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park features a large, open grassy area that will be used for performances with a portable stage brought in when needed.

1. So no longer a swimming area?

2. Why won't there be a beach? That was my favorite part of the initial proposal.

3. Can I have my beach and lagoon back? I want my feet in the sand not the mud with my beach blanket..jus' sayin'...it sounds like wetland is being created. That means bugs. Lots of bugs.

4. Will there be any place for swimming?

5. Is this kind of a gravel beach like that at Brooklyn Bridge Park?

6. Is it possible to still include a smaller sandy beach to lay out on in the water garden area instead of just having all gravelly beaches? There was something very unique about a sandy beach right in the heart of the city (like in Chicago)

The Conservancy is excited about the new plans for the Water Garden, which do not include a swimming component. The new features in this area provide significantly more functionality for visitors and will be a four-season destination. On hot summer days kids can still enjoy the park in their swimsuits. The water play area is a great place for kids to splash around. There will still be gravel edges for kids to wade into the water, but the function is more balanced. A couple things to add: 1. It's a garden. Not a typical wetland area, but a high quality, rich botanical garden. 2. The bottom of the Water Garden will be gravelly, not mucky or rocky, and there will be gravel edges to sit on, which will bring people to the water's edge.

Regarding the freezing benefits of the Water Garden - the Cove was 10 feet deep, the Water Garden will be mostly 2-3 feet deep throughout with a few spots that are 6-7 feet deep, so there's a better chance of it freezing over in winter which will allow for ice skating.

Are there plans to use clean energy sources on site to power the water pump, lighting and other mechanisms that require energy?

To date, the Conservancy is not looking at solar for these purposes, but the team will take another look at it to determine if it is feasible.

Will there be a tie-up spot for larger vessels? School ships equipped with labs for example, outside the Water Garden but within the park itself. This would facilitate aquatic science programs such as MSU's Great Lakes Education Program to meet up with DPS students downtown instead of having them travel miles to a Metropark to participate in such programs.

Currently there is one tie-up location for United States Coast Guard vessels at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. Additional tie ups would require engineering changes and additional reinforcement to the seawall. The Conservancy is proud of the relationships it maintains with numerous educational entities and looks forward to developing new programs with partners.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

[Aren't some types of loosestrife invasive? Be careful what is planted.](#)

Yes, purple loosestrife IS invasive, swamp loosestrife is NOT invasive. The Conservancy will work with experts to make sure that no invasive species will be planted anywhere along the Southwest Greenway or at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

[Need programming on shipping on the river. Signage, telescope. Shipping and river travel is one big part of why we're here in Detroit. Thanks.](#)

The Conservancy would really like to showcase the history of the site, and that includes shipping.

[So many exciting, beautiful things coming to Detroit! Any hints at what other projects may be coming to Detroit in the future? More greenways? More riverfront development? Parks?](#)

The Conservancy is excited about the construction of new greenways and parks along the Detroit Riverfront and looks forward to extending the Riverwalk along the West Riverfront.

[Will any parts of the park be accessible during construction?](#)

This fall, the Conservancy will put up fences to close the site off during construction. For the safety of the public, the property will not be accessible.

[Just a suggestion, but it would be nice to see the Michigan Science Center be a partner in those programs with Huron-Clinton Metro Park.](#)

The Conservancy has been fortunate to work with MSC during other events, such as River Days, and hopes to continue to partner with them and other groups as programming at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is expanded.

[Can you describe the functional activities of the smaller remnant cove slit still directly connected to the river?](#)

This area will be a wetland that will provide a resting area for the wildlife.

[How is the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy integrating planning and learning from the Indigenous community who historically lived along the Detroit River?](#)

The programming at the park hopes to tell the rich history of the site including the contributions of the indigenous community, the black shipping community and more.

[Connect with the Humbug Marsh Eco Centre on programs / education /conservation?](#)

The Conservancy has representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on its programming committee which will seek to develop numerous great opportunities to connect and grow environmental education and conservation programming.

[Will there be a concert event area in or next to the park?](#)

The far west end of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will be called The Hill. There will be small concerts there, and there will be spaces for events/activities throughout. These events will be smaller than festivals like Mo Pop. Provisions have been made to accommodate a stage at the base of the large, open grassy area known as The Hill.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

Great updates. Thank you for the amazing work. Is there any news of when the connection between the walkway in front of the former JLA will be opened? Is there also any update on the parcel in between the Ralph C Wilson Park and Riverfront Towers?

The Riverwalk in front of the former Joe Louis Arena VIP parking lot is now open. The Boardwalk in front of Riverfront Towers, while complete, is not open. This year, seawall repair work will begin along the DDA parcel just west of Riverfront Towers. That stretch of Riverwalk will open to the public when a connection to Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is complete.

Are some of the pavilion roofs green roofs? Are they allowable to be climbable?

The Conservancy loves the idea of green roofs, but due to high costs to maintain the roof and for safety reasons, there will not be green roofs at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The roofs are not climbable.

What happened to the winter ice skating?

The Water Garden will mostly be 2-3 feet deep, with several points 6-7 feet deep, so there's a better chance of it freezing over in winter for ice skating than the Cove, which was 10 feet deep.

Will there be public launch sites at the new park?

There will be no public launch sites into the Detroit River at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The Water Garden will feature some opportunities for people to try out small row boats, however personal watercraft will not be allowed to launch in this area as the conditions of the river make it very challenging. Personal watercraft can be launched at the Fort Wayne Boat Launch, or the new kayak launch at Dossin Museum on Belle Isle.

Was there a change in requirements to keep the river's edge straight without projections (Dock, fish habitat islands etc.)

The initial design concept did include an island and two jetties extending out into river; however, after conversation with federal and state agencies and the fire department, it was determined that life safety would dictate the design of the river's edge.

What about a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Riverwalk near the Riverfront Towers Marina? Any tentative date?

The Conservancy looks forward to opening the boardwalk in front of Riverfront Towers when connections to the properties east and west of the property can be made.

1. Where will the fishermen be able to fish?

2. Can you be more specific about fishing areas?

There are seawall and soft shore edges at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. Fishing will be allowed along defined areas of the riverfront. Fishing will still be available at the park to the west of the Water Garden along the river's edge, which is the most utilized spot for fisherman currently, and where the water is the deepest.

Are you indicating the riverfront expansion from Fort Wayne all the way down to Belle Isle?

The Conservancy's vision is 5.5 miles of revitalized riverfront from the Belle Isle Bridge to the Ambassador Bridge. Current Joe Louis Greenway plans do call for connections all the way to Fort Wayne.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

Does the city have any plan to develop the section of West Jefferson that is currently “abandoned” which is the gravel street connecting RCW Park to the Ambassador Bridge?

Please email this question to joelouisgreenway@detroitmi.gov so that it can be forwarded to Detroit Public Works.

What are the pathway materials made of?

Pathway materials will consist of asphalt.

When will be your next proposed meeting of the Detroit Riverfront Expansion?

The Conservancy does not currently have a date identified for the next community meeting. Your E-mail has been added to the database. Please check out the DRFC website regularly for updated information on the riverfront. www.detroitriverfront.org.

Are there any ideas / plans for more greenways on the further east side?

Currently, Joseph Campau Greenway, Joe Louis Greenway and the Southwest Greenway are the only greenway projects planned by the City and the Conservancy.

Are there any plans to update Hart Plaza?

The City of Detroit is currently working on an East Riverfront Asset Study. They have an open focus group for the Civic Center area including Hart Plaza on April 21. Info is below <https://detroitmi.gov/events/focus-group-civic-center-hart-plaza-fist-spirit-plaza>

Great job DRFC! These improvements will improve the lives of Detroiters and the health of our waterways. Looking forward to it.

Thank you for all you do as well!

I am excited about the educational components. Hopefully the rich history is shared also.

We are excited to introduce a robust educational program to our parks and public spaces. We will be sure to highlight the historical, cultural, and environmental aspects of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

Not a question - but just another comment to compliment the designers for a very improved concept and design from the early days. Thank you. The interaction with water, without trying to “swim” is a major improvement to the design. In terms of what I have seen around the world on riverfront and riverfront parks, and from what I know in terms of this city, this approach will be far more valuable year-round for our community. (And I thought this before I heard Mark Wallace who is echoing my comments.)

We appreciate your feedback. Thank you.

Any sponsorship / help from U.S Post Centre?

The Conservancy will continue to work closely with the U.S. Postal Service facility located across the street from Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park as the park continues to become a reality.

WEST RIVERFRONT UPDATE

Questions & Answers

April 8, 2021 5:30 – 7:00 pm

We totally agree with the redesign of the water garden to not have a designated swim area and concentration on environmental education. Belle Isle is much better and safer.

Thank you for your feedback. The Conservancy feels that the Water Garden will allow for four-season enjoyment for visitors to Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park.

The overall design looks completely different in design than the one model that was originally planned. Of the four main elements to the park, The Hill, Play Garden and Sport House have not changed significantly. The Cove has evolved into the Water Garden, which is a significant change from the original vision. Several changes to elements of the park are in direct response to concerns members of the community proposed during previous meetings. The change allows more people to enjoy the water experience year-round.

The original plan was on display at the Ren Cen for the design competition! Why was it changed??

The evolution from the Cove to the Water Garden was developed to provide visitors with a safer and more immersive experience to interact with the water and it will allow more people to utilize the park during all four seasons.

Thank you for the update! Looking forward to this wonderful new riverfront asset!!

Thanks for the feedback.

Will the architect be doing a public session as well?

MVVA will certainly participate in any upcoming Community Meetings the Conservancy hosts.

Amazing and thoughtful design. Can't wait for it to come to fruition!

Thanks for the feedback. The Conservancy is excited as well.

More possibilities for potential for federal funding with new Biden Administration?

The Conservancy team is actively exploring all funding options and that includes working with park systems around the world to find more funding for public spaces.

How does the Riverfront or the City plan to deal with all the homeless people who currently live in that area in large numbers?

The riverfront public spaces are for everyone. The Conservancy works closely with the City of Detroit to aid our homeless population in helping find resources around housing and mental health.