



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DETROIT RIVERFRONT CONSERVANCY ANNOUNCES WINNING FIRM OF INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION TO REIMAGINE WEST RIVERFRONT PARK

NEW YORK-BASED MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH ASSOCIATES – DESIGNERS OF BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK IN NEW YORK CITY AND MAGGIE DALEY PARK IN CHICAGO – SELECTED TO TRANSFORM DETROIT’S WEST RIVERFRONT PARK INTO WORLD-CLASS GATHERING PLACE

DETROIT, April 10, 2018 – The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy announced today that New York-based landscape architect firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) has been selected as the winning firm of its international design competition to transform the 22-acre West Riverfront Park in downtown Detroit into one of the most dynamic public spaces in the world. Renderings and information for media are available [here](#).

“This design competition has captured the interest and the imaginations of not only Detroiters, but of people throughout the world,” said Matt Cullen, chairman of the Conservancy’s Board of Directors. “The creation of West Riverfront Park would be one of the most significant public space projects undertaken in our city’s history. It has the potential to become a world-class gathering place and drive economic growth in Southwest Detroit for generations.”

Since the Conservancy opened West Riverfront Park in 2014, it has become a popular destination for Detroiters and tourists alike who enjoy the park’s wide-open spaces and sweeping views of the Detroit and Windsor skylines. At 22 acres, it is comparable in size to Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York City, Maggie Daley Park in Chicago and Riverside Park in Buffalo.

“It was love at first sight when I saw the Detroit River,” said Michael Van Valkenburgh, president & CEO of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. “I immediately recognized that this new park could draw the city to the water’s edge. My team and I spent a lot of time exploring Detroit and meeting many Detroiters in the process. We’re looking forward to making West Riverfront Park an amazing place.”

Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York and Maggie Daley Park in Chicago are among the firm’s most notable projects. MVVA is known worldwide for its creative and unique urban design with projects that include parks, plazas, cultural institutions, colleges and universities and gardens. Clients include Princeton University, Harvard University, Wellesley College, The Menil Collection and Waterfront Toronto.

The MVVA team was made even stronger by the addition of Sir David Adjaye, principal of Adjaye Associates, who has been described in Time Magazine, as “one of the great architectural visionaries of our time.”

In 2017, Adjaye was the only architect to be named to the Time Magazine list of 100 Most Influential People. The same year, he won the London Design Medal and received a knighthood from the Queen of England. He also completed the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC.

The Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates team also includes, Utile, Mobility in Chain (MIC), and Emmanuel Pratt. The firm's local partners included LimnoTech (Ann Arbor), PEA (Detroit) and NTH Consultants (Northville).

The firm's projects have received many significant professional honors for design excellence and for innovation. MVVA's work with Brooklyn Bridge Park was awarded the Brendan Gill Prize from the Municipal Art Society of New York in 2010, which is given to a work of art that best captures the energy and spirit of New York City. Additionally, the firm was selected as the Firm of the Year by the American Society of Landscape Architects in 2016. Last year, the firm received the Global Award for Excellence from the Urban Land Institute for its work on the Corktown Common Project in Toronto.

"This park will have a profound impact on the lives of Detroiters and will be a regional draw for recreation," said Mark Wallace, president & CEO, the Detroit RiverFront Conservancy. "The work that has brought us to this moment has been one of the most inclusive and transparent processes that has been undertaken in public space design anywhere."

From its launch in 2017, the West Riverfront Park Design Competition has incorporated a unique community-led design process in which the public has been encouraged to share their ideas and input. To date, the Conservancy has held more 20 public meetings on the future of West Riverfront Park. Additionally, the Conservancy created a Community Advisory Team (CAT) of Detroiters who visited New York, Chicago and Philadelphia to bring back ideas for the future of West Riverfront Park.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation provided a \$345,000 grant to make the West Riverfront Park Design Competition possible and further underscoring the power of public-private partnership in rebuilding Detroit. The grant comes from the foundation's "Livable Communities" focus area that seeks to create strong and sustainable communities by supporting parks, trails and green design.

"We're proud to support the design competition and welcome MVVA to this pivotal project for Detroit," said David Egner, president & CEO of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. "Transforming West Riverfront Park into a world-class gathering space allows our community to take a significant step toward revitalizing the entire West Riverfront. This project has the potential to make a significant positive impact that will resonate throughout our region for many decades."

The public first viewed the work of the four firms during formal presentations on February 8 at 1001 Woodward in downtown Detroit. The presentations were then followed by a two week public exhibition at which the models and renderings were on display.

The MVVA models and renderings will be on display for the next several weeks. One of the firm's winning models will be on display in the Prentis Court at the Detroit Institute of Arts through May 6.

Another model and renderings will be on display in the Wintergarden at the GM Renaissance Center through May 10.

The winning firm was selected based on the decision of the jury that the Conservancy assembled for the competition, as well as from feedback during the public exhibition of the models and renderings.

“As Detroit's revitalization continues, one of our guiding principles has been that the riverfront is for everyone, and this design delivers on that promise,” said Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan. “We all remember just over a decade ago when our riverfront was lined with parking lots and cement silos. The fact that four of the best design firms in the world participated in this competition shows just how far our International riverfront has come under the leadership of the Conservancy.”

In addition to MVVA, the other firms in the final round of competition included: Gustafson Guthrie Nichol (GGN), Hood Design Studio (HDS) and James Corner Field Operations.

Next steps in bringing a transformed West Riverfront Park to fruition include the Conservancy working with MVVA to further engage the public in honing in on the final design elements of the project. Throughout this process, the Conservancy will continue to raise the funds for the estimated \$50 million project.

In addition to the support received from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation for the design competition, riverfront planning is made possible by the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, Fifth Third Bank, FORD/UAW, the City of Detroit, Hudson Webber Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the Kresge Foundation and the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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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 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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