



DETROIT RIVERFRONT CONSERVANCY

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A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

Time to break out the fishing poles and picnic baskets and head down to the #1 Riverwalk in America!

We are humbled by the overwhelming amount of support our Riverwalk received in the USA TODAY 10Best Riverwalks poll and we are grateful to everyone who voted for us. “Best Riverwalk” is not just a win for the riverfront, it’s a win for our entire community.

Our Riverwalk was developed by the people of Detroit through hundreds of community meetings and thousands of supporters who came together to create a space that is truly the face of our great city. This national recognition is the spotlight that Detroiters deserve for dreaming big

and accomplishing the tremendous transformation of our riverfront.

Our work continues as we begin our busiest construction year ever. As you’ll see in the pages ahead, our collective vision is at a pivotal moment in the story of the Detroit Riverfront.

As we approach upcoming groundbreakings and significant milestones, we also reflect on the importance of public space that was brought to light this past year—with a 20% increase in patrons on the Riverwalk and 40% along the Dequindre Cut—these spaces truly became essential.

Our programs this year will feature a mix of new and returning favorites and continue to be focused on

engaging the mind, body and soul and ensuring that people will remain connected to the riverfront.

With trees starting to bud, plants sprouting in our flower beds and people rediscovering our public places, spring is always such a magical time along the Detroit Riverfront. The entire Detroit Riverfront Conservancy team looks forward to seeing you sometime very soon.

Thank you for your support.

Mark Wallace
President & CEO





CONSTRUCTION SPRINGS INTO

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy will make significant strides toward completing its vision of 5.5 miles of revitalized riverfront from bridge to bridge in 2021.

The **DDA Parcel** The Conservancy anticipates a groundbreaking on the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) parcel later this year. The parcel is located just west of Riverfront Towers. In the coming months, contractors hired by the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC) will begin working to repair the seawall along the waterfront. While that is happening, the project team will finalize the design of the Riverwalk, which will include new lighting elements, seating, a scenic plaza for gatherings, and a pathway connecting visitors to Wilson Park.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park

As the finishing touches to

the design phase of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park are completed in the upcoming months, the Conservancy looks forward to a fall groundbreaking for this much-anticipated destination. The 22-acre park will include an expansive lawn for special events, a large water feature, a Sport House with basketball courts, and the Delta Dental Children's Play Garden. With completion scheduled for 2023, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is sure to become a popular go-to summer destination for riverfront visitors of all ages all year round.

Southwest Greenway

The Southwest Greenway (formerly referred to as May Creek Greenway), will provide

a beautiful getaway and fun, safe and convenient access to the West Riverfront and Wilson Park for residents of Corktown and Southwest Detroit, and for workers in those neighborhoods. With the final easements in place and the design stage nearing completion, the Conservancy will break ground this summer.

Uniroyal Promenade

Ahead of an official groundbreaking for the Riverwalk this spring, crews are currently on site at the Uniroyal property clearing land and placing rip rap along the water's edge. This stone barrier will help to prevent erosion, and will serve as a base for the Riverwalk and a habitat for fish species. Once the rip rap is in place, construction can begin on the Riverwalk



ACTION ON THE RIVERFRONT



pathway itself. When complete, this section of riverfront will officially connect Gabriel Richard Park with Mt. Elliott Park – the last step in creating a continuous 3.5 miles of Riverwalk along the East Riverfront.

Joseph Campau Greenway

With the first phase of the Joseph Campau Greenway complete, pedestrians have been enjoying the new path from Jefferson Avenue to Robert Bradby Drive. The greenway features a 10-foot wide pedestrian and bicycle path,

new benches, lighting, security call boxes and beautiful landscaping.

Currently in Phase Two of construction, the greenway will extend all the way to Vernor Highway, and will provide residents on Detroit's East Side with safe and scenic access to the riverfront. The Conservancy Security and Operations teams will manage the greenway and ensure that it is safe and well maintained for people to enjoy.



CELEBRATING WINTER AT

With a pandemic impacting our entire community, the team at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy knew that the people of Detroit needed somewhere fun and safe to spend some time this winter. From December through mid-March, the Conservancy created 14 weeks of free and family-friendly programming at Robert C. Valade Park.

The Conservancy helped visitors of all ages embrace the winter season with oversized outdoor fireplaces, warm seasonal drinks, marshmallow roasting, sledding, delicious food, and games such as box hockey and curling every weekend.

In addition, for four select weekends, the Conservancy offered special programming to keep Detroiters' spirits up. Starting with a holiday theme with live music, festive lights and decorations, and an ice sculpture exhibition featuring the work of 10 Detroit-area artists. The other themed weekends included a Fire & Ice festival with live music, an ice carving

competition with 90's jams spun by the best local DJs, and Valentine's themed activities such as horse-drawn carriage rides. All the while, riverfront volunteers were in attendance to pass out free gloves and hand warmers to those who needed them.

"As always, the Conservancy is committed to the health and safety of its visitors and volunteers," said Rachel Frierson, director of programming for the Detroit Riverfront

"As always, the Conservancy is committed to the health and safety of its visitors and volunteers. By extending programming on our great riverfront year-round and offering fun socially-distanced activities, we've been able to provide a much-needed place of respite for the community."

– Rachel Frierson, director of programming for the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

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In addition to the weekend programming, the Conservancy hosted a number of events

throughout the winter to support the mental and physical health of riverfront visitors. Activities included Polar Fitness classes and a youth meditation workshop in which kids learned new skills to help with the social isolation of remote learning.



ROBERT C. VALADE PARK

For those unable to visit the riverfront in person, the Conservancy offered myriad virtual programming and online resources as well. In collaboration with the Detroit Experience Factory, virtual visitors participated in Black history and women's history tours of the Detroit Riverfront while taking

a trip through time to learn about the historic people and places that shaped the city.

Now as spring approaches, the Conservancy team is looking forward to welcoming visitors again for more exciting programming throughout the rest of the year.





Spring Programming **ON THE RIVERFRONT**

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy looks forward to welcoming visitors to the parks and greenways along the Detroit River. Here are a few upcoming programs to enjoy this spring:

Earth Week on the Riverfront

When: April 17 - 24

This spring, join the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy in celebrating Earth Week by participating in cleanup events happening along the riverfront from April 17 - 24. In partnership with the Detroit River Coalition, there will be many individual and group cleanup events during Earth Week, culminating in the Conservancy's annual "Cleanup the Cut" event on April 24. Those interested in participating are asked to register online on the Conservancy's website.

To ensure the safety of all volunteers, masks and social distancing will be required. Moreover, the Conservancy will be providing trash bags, gloves, masks and hand sanitizer for everyone.

Rain Barrels on the Riverfront

When: Saturday, April 24 from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Where: Gabriel Richard Park

In partnership with Sierra Club Great Lakes and MI Rain Barrel, the Conservancy is once again hosting Rain Barrels on the Riverfront! In accordance with COVID-19 guidelines, this will be a curbside, contactless pickup event on Saturday, April 24 at Gabriel Richard Park from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Rain barrels are an easy way to help reduce storm water pollution, and are available to reserve online for \$60, with a limited number of scholarship barrels available to Detroit residents.





For more information and to purchase a barrel, visit <https://mirainbarrel.com/signup/>.

Rise Together

When: Monthly starting May 13

Where: Check Conservancy website for updates

The Conservancy is happy to announce that Rise Together will be returning to the riverfront this year! Inspired by the Detroit Sunrise Club, participants will enjoy relaxing music followed by a 10-minute guided meditation prior to a group viewing of the sunrise or sunset alongside the scenic Detroit River.

With this socially distanced event, it is the goal of the Conservancy to help provide Detroiters with a safe space to be together with their community, and a network of resources and support to those affected by COVID-19. Information on local emotional, social and grief support will be provided at the events.

Rise Together is a monthly event that will be starting at sunrise on May 13 and continuing through the fall. Be sure to check the Conservancy's website for location updates, scheduled dates, and possible date changes due to inclement weather.



BATTLE OF THE BANDS

its second #BeingApartTogether event. This creative fundraiser brings supporters of the riverfront together in a virtual format to celebrate the Detroit Riverfront and all that it means for the community.

As part of the celebration, this event will feature a Battle of the Bands virtual concert in which local performers will vie for a National Stage spot in a future River Days lineup. The riverfront community will have the chance to tune-in to the Conservancy's Facebook page for the virtual concert and vote for their favorite performer.

Additionally, supporters will be able to purchase a special package of limited-edition summer items for making memories on the riverfront this year. As part of the Buy-One-Give-One program, not only will supporters receive their box of locally sourced #BeingApartTogether items curated by City Bird, but a family from one of the Conservancy's charity partners will receive a box of summer fun as well!

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the Detroit Riverfront has remained open to visitors every day,

supporting the physical and mental well-being of the community. As a result, since March 2020 the Detroit Riverwalk has seen a 20 percent increase in use and the Dequindre Cut has seen a 40 percent increase, thereby highlighting the essential nature of the Conservancy's work.

"The past year has really demonstrated how important our parks and public spaces are to our community," said Cassie Brenske, chief development officer for the Detroit

Riverfront Conservancy.

"Contributions through the #BeingApartTogether campaign will allow us to continue funding the vital services that make the riverfront such a beautiful, safe and tranquil place to be."

With summer just around the corner and hopeful developments in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone is looking forward to a time when the community can come

together once more for annual events and festivities along the riverfront. Until then, the Conservancy will continue to provide creative and safe ways to keep members of the community connected to the riverfront and to each other.



If you are interested in supporting or sponsoring this fundraiser and finding other ways to get involved, please e-mail us at events@detroitriverfront.org.



BEST RIVERWALK IN THE COUNTRY

Detroit Riverwalk was named the Best Riverwalk in the country in the 2021 USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice travel awards contest.

The Detroit Riverfront: Best Riverwalk in America

For almost two decades, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy has worked with the community to reimagine the city's riverfront.

During that time, Detroit's riverfront has gone from a blighted area with limited public access to a beautiful four-season destination with parks, plazas and greenways that draws more than 3.5 million visitors a year.

For Detroiters, the Detroit Riverfront is a source of pride.

While it's never been a secret around town how Detroiters feel about their Riverwalk, the Detroit Riverwalk wasn't always included in the conversation on a national scale when it came to the list of top riverwalks in the country.

That all changed at the end of February as the Detroit



Riverwalk was named the Best Riverwalk in the country in the USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice travel awards contest.

There were 20 riverwalks throughout the country in the competition. Detroit beat out such popular Riverwalks as the Chicago Riverwalk, Charles River Esplanade (Boston), San Antonio Riverwalk and Wilmington Riverwalk in Delaware. The aim of the competition was to provide readers with unbiased and experience-based content of the top attractions in the U.S.

The win was a particularly rewarding one for the leadership of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy because the Detroit Riverwalk wasn't victorious based on the opinions of an outside panel of experts. The Detroit Riverwalk won because it was the people of the community who voted for it.

"We are humbled by the response from all throughout the community and appreciative of the people who voted," said Mark Wallace, president and CEO of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. "Detroiters love their riverfront, and we are incredibly proud that our city's riverfront is being recognized on a national level. This is a tremendous honor for our entire community."

The Best Riverwalk designation is particularly noteworthy as the Conservancy prepares for its busiest construction year, ever in 2021. This year, the Conservancy will host several groundbreakings and make significant progress toward its vision of 5.5 miles of revitalized riverfront.

"The Detroit Riverfront is a very special place for our city, and we are honored by this recognition. We have a tremendous year ahead and will continue to set the bar even higher as we finish up the East Riverfront and move to the west."

- Matt Cullen, chair of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JO-ANN HALE

A born-and-raised Detroiter, Jo-Ann Hale has been a long-time volunteer on the riverfront, donating her time as far back as 2005. Her experience and knowledge of the riverfront has made her an excellent choice to serve as Volunteer Delegate to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's Board of Directors – a brand new role that is meant to further the Conservancy's relationship with its volunteers. In her new role, Jo-Ann will speak to other volunteers and visitors and share with the board. This is something that Jo-Ann has been doing all along.

When Jo-Ann volunteers, she always looks for positions that allow her to be outside and in the center of the action. "I just love being out on the riverfront and being engaged with people as they're coming down to the Riverwalk," she said. "It doesn't matter what it is, so long as I can be outside and interact with the people."

In the winter months, Jo-Ann would typically prefer to volunteer indoors, but because of the current restrictions due to the pandemic, she is outside nearly every weekend helping with the winter programming at Valade Park. Surprisingly, it has been something that she has really enjoyed,

and she is grateful for the Conservancy's efforts to protect and support its volunteers and visitors.

"The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy lets you know in words and actions how much they appreciate you," said Jo-Ann. "At the beginning of the pandemic, the staff made phone calls to all the

volunteers to check and see that they were okay and if there was anything at all that they could do to help them. How many times have you received a call like that?"

To Jo-Ann, watching the transformation of the Detroit Riverfront over

the years has meant everything, and from the perspective of a volunteer – meeting and greeting visitors to the riverfront from all over the world – she has seen firsthand the impact that the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's work has had on the city of Detroit. "I just hope that the Conservancy is around for many years, doing what they have always been doing as stewards of the riverfront."

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– Jo-Ann Hale, Volunteer Delegate to the Board of Directors at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

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



WE NEED YOUR HELP

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy team is encouraged to see that during the first several months of 2021, significant progress is being made throughout our community in the fight against the pandemic.

Despite the challenges we all faced, it was a great source of pride for us to see that more people than ever before embraced the riverfront public spaces in 2020. We are looking forward to keeping the momentum going this year and are energized by the Detroit Riverwalk recently being named the Best Riverwalk in the country by USA Today/10Best. It is quite an honor indeed.

This year will see several exciting construction projects that will continue to shape the transformation of the riverfront. Additionally, we are putting the finishing touches on a robust programming schedule that will have something for everyone this year.

As the perpetual stewards of the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut, the non-profit Conservancy will continue to raise the funds needed to keep our public spaces accessible, safe, programmed and beautiful. While more people discover the Detroit Riverfront each and every year, the funds needed for maintenance, operations, landscaping, security and other resources grows as well.

WAYS TO GIVE

Considering a gift to the riverfront? Here are some ways you can help out:

- 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 over the last 18 years 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/n11

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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