

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

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Draft Final Report

Proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District

2200/2600 East Atwater Street



By a resolution dated October 23, 2018, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

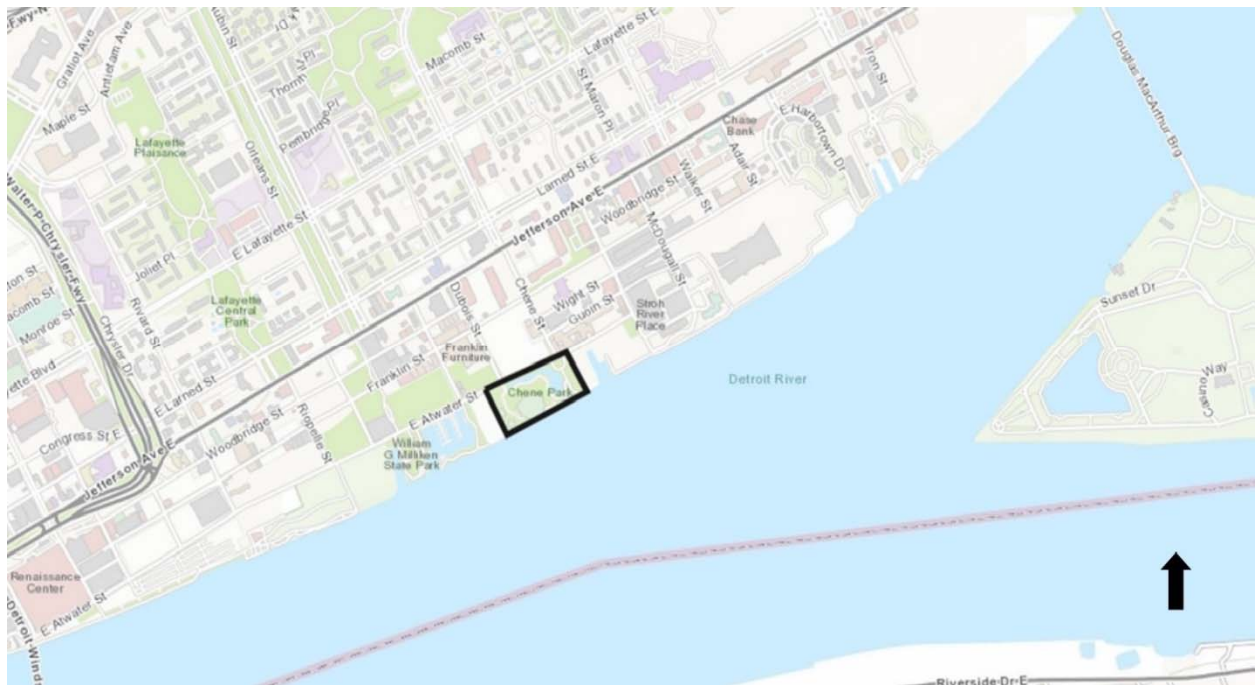
The proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District consists of a single 9.3 acre parcel owned by the Detroit Recreation Department and contains a covered amphitheater with a stage, seating and an adjacent multi-level pavilion. Other features include a ticket booth, small

merchandising building, administrative office, and a building operated by the City of Detroit Water and Sewage Department. Prominent landscaping features include the entry plaza, mall, and festival plaza, including the seawall, pond, signage, lighting, benches, planters, fencing, vegetation, manmade contours of the hill and berms, and two outdoor sculptures.

The proposed historic district is located on the East Riverfront at the foot of the Detroit River approximately 1.25 miles east from the city center and near the intersection of East Atwater and Chene Streets, addressed as both 2200 and 2600 East Atwater Street. It is situated along the Detroit Riverwalk within the Rivertown-Warehouse District neighborhood and is west of Belle Isle, south-east of the Lafayette Park historic district, and adjacent to the William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor. The surrounding area features scattered industrial buildings, many of which have been converted into residential lofts and offices.

BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District are outlined in heavy black on the attached map, and are as follows:



The northeast and southwest boundaries are co-determinate with the northwest and southwest boundaries, extended northwest and southeast, of the parcel described as: S E ATWATER W 124.50 FT OF CHENE FARM P C 733 LYG S OF AND ADJ ATWATER ST 50 FT WD 11/4 1 THRU 5BLK 1 SUB OF PT JAMES CAMPAU FARM E 1/2 OF P C 91 L2 P17 PLATS, W C R 9/1 ALSO THAT PT OF THE DUBOIS FARM W 1/2 OF P C 91 LYG S OF E ATWATER ST 50 FT WD 9/11 403,191 SQ FT.

The northwest boundary is the centerline of East Atwater Street.

The southeast boundary is the Detroit harbor line.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries described above consist of the original boundaries of the land purchased by the City of Detroit in 1979 to create Chene Park and includes the entire parcel.

HISTORY

Significance Statement

The proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District is significant at the local level under National Register Criteria A for Community Planning and Development for its association with local planning efforts to reclaim and redevelop the Detroit Riverfront for public use and to support economic development by enhancing the local entertainment industry with a riverfront music venue. As Chene Park, it had the distinction of being the first phase of the Linked Riverfront Parks Project.

Its period of significance is defined as 1982, when the groundbreaking ceremony took place, to 1990, when the park was reopened after undergoing site improvements.

Early History of the Detroit Riverfront

Archeological evidence suggests that Native American tribes lived along the Detroit River as early as A.D. 750.¹ By the 1600s, the Anishinaabe, Wyandot, Iroquois, Fox, Miami, and Sauk tribes used the Detroit River as a place to hunt and gather. Many of the early Native American trails now trace Detroit's major arterial roadways, including East Jefferson Avenue.

The French were the first Europeans to arrive to establish Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit in 1701 as a permanent military outpost and fur trading center with the Native Americans along the narrowest part of the strait between Lake Erie and Lake Huron. Within the first decade, the French divided land along the waterways east of the fort into *ribbon or strip farms*. The long narrow plots of land guaranteed water access to a maximum of settlers who farmed the land. The first grants for the ribbon farms were located east of the fort. Many of these early land grantees are memorialized in the street names that still run to the riverfront around the proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District like Chene, Joseph Campau, Dubois and St. Aubin. Water access supported a bountiful farming community and the close proximity of housing along the water's edge provided security from frontier attacks.

¹ State of Michigan Registry of Historic Sites, #S0704.

Farming flourished much of the nineteenth century until industrialization took hold in the later part of the century. Silas Farmer's *1890 History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan* noted that Michigan's manufacturing industry was supported by the abundance and quality of its iron, copper and lumber resources. Michigan possessed the largest deposits of quality iron, had the largest copper smelting works, and produced more lumber than any other state in the United States at the close the nineteenth century.

By 1885, the Detroit riverfront proved an ideal link for shipping Michigan's abundant natural resources to America's eastern shore. The riverfront vicinity east of St. Aubin and west of Belle Isle had transformed to predominantly lumber yards and its related industries. The area associated with the Chene Park parcel was owned by Moffat Eatherly and Company Lumber and Detroit Lumber on 1885 and 1911 maps, respectively, and the general area was filled with holding and staging areas for the lumber industry. Hugh Moffat (1810-1884), founder of Moffat Eatherly and Company Lumber, had come to the "City of the Straits" in 1837.² He started as a carpenter and moved into the lumber trades in 1852. He served as the Mayor of Detroit from 1872 to 1876 and formed a partnership shortly thereafter with his son, Addison and Florance Darling Eatherly for the lumber company in 1878. A sawmill is the only known building on early maps (1885-1923) where the proposed Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District is now located. The sawmill was noted in Silas Farmer's Biographical Edition of the *History of Detroit (1889)* as one of Moffat's "last enterprises" and considered one of the best in the state of Michigan.³

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Detroit had become a bustling city, amassing a population of more than 2 million. With Detroit's strategic connection to the Great Lakes, manufacturing and commerce along the riverfront thrived during the first half of the twentieth century. Several maps from 1885 to the 1920s reveal a shift in the riverfront industries from lumberyards to ship and railroad car building companies and various industries associated with iron, steel, and coal products. The 1897 Sanborn map shows a dry dock located where the Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park parcel is today and the 1923 Baist Atlas map indicates that the Imperial Ship Company acquired most of the parcel with sandyards flanking both sides. These sandyards eventually become Medusa Concrete and Petoskey Portland Cement Company/Penn-Dixie Company servicing trade routes from Detroit along the Great Lakes to destinations in Northern Michigan, Chicago, Milwaukee, Toledo, etc.

Early City Planning Efforts for the Detroit Riverfront

With the rapid growth of urban industrialization, Americans began to seek ways to improve city living and address the increasing pollution, population, and public health concerns. Society's upper classes were the first to champion for city parks as places contributing to better health. After 1900, supporters of social reform also held that parks were a healthier alternative than going to saloons

² Farmer, Silas. *The History of Detroit and Michigan or "The Metropolis Illustrated."* 1889, Biographical Edition.

³ Two previous mills occupied the site, the first burned and the second was removed for the one described in the 1889 book.

to socialize. The concept of large urban parks promoting a better quality of living started in England in the early 1800s and was imported to New York City when Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux won a competition for their design of Central Park. Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) became America's most well-known landscape architect, going on to design numerous parks nationwide during his career including Detroit's Belle Isle in the 1880s as the country's largest city island park (although not fully realized according to Olmsted's vision).

After Belle Isle Park was established in 1845, parks were included in subsequent Detroit Master Plan of Policies. Noted architect and city planner Edward H. Bennett was commissioned by the Detroit City Plan and Improvement Commission to conduct the 1915 Preliminary Plan of Detroit. Bennett was well known for his association and collaboration with Daniel Burnham on the 1909 Chicago City Plan for which he designed Grant Park. After the 1915 Preliminary Plan of Detroit was published, the City Plan Commission was created to formalize a comprehensive plan to make greenspace recommendations for "the development of parks, recreation areas, boulevards, and the riverfront." Those recommendations led to a 1927 approved Master Plan that included an idea to create a Riverside Drive near the Detroit River complete with networked parks. Unfortunately, though the networked parks concept was brought forward, Riverside Drive never met fruition.

City planning efforts for parks and recreation development along the Detroit River gradually increased in scope; the 1947 Master Plan included the riverfront from the Central Business District to the eastern city limits at Alter Road and the 1965 Master Plan included the entire riverfront.⁴ Emphasis on the waterfront as an important advantage for industrial development remained prevalent, although the 1963 Port of Detroit Riverfront Study prepared for the Area Redevelopment Administration for the U.S. Department of Congress concurred with the city's objective to orient "long-range planning for the waterfront area east of the Civic Center to light industrial, commercial, or residential/recreational purposes."⁵

As was the case in many other American cities, economic changes included a major decline in manufacturing infrastructure within Detroit after WWII. As manufacturing plants moved to the outer reaches of suburbs made accessible by an expanding freeway system, the loss of manufacturing infrastructure was detrimental to a much needed tax base. As manufacturing left Detroit, vast areas of the city were abandoned and in some places heavily polluted.

Linked Riverfront Parks Project

Mayor Coleman A. Young (1974-1994) took office in 1974 amid many challenges generated by a declining tax base. Mayor Young believed that the revitalization of the downtown riverfront using private and public partnerships with federal, state and local funds would spur additional economic and community development. During his initial run for office, Mayor Young emphasized his desire

⁴ 1973 Detroit Master Plan

⁵ 1963 Port of Detroit Riverfront Study

to revitalize the riverfront between the Ambassador Bridge in Southwest Detroit and the MacArthur Bridge leading to Belle Isle. The opening of Hart Plaza in 1975 and the Renaissance Center in 1977 served as anchors for his urban policy agenda.

Shortly after Mayor Young took office, an \$80,000 Coastal Zone Management federal grant was awarded to provide funding for a riverfront revitalization study that would serve as the foundation of the Linked Riverfront Parks Project to “link” the Central Business District to Belle Isle along the Detroit riverfront. The Coastal Zone Management Act was passed by Congress in 1972 to provide funds to assist with planning efforts to develop wise use of coastal areas across the county, including the Great Lakes. The City of Detroit Recreation Department under Director Leon Atchison selected Detroit based architectural firm Schervish, Vogel, Merz PC (SVM) to work with Project Manager Harriet Saperstein to prepare the cohesive riverfront redevelopment plan after a request for proposal went out to the public.

Mayor Young formally introduced the Linked Riverfront Parks Project in his *Moving Detroit Forward...for Urban Economic Revitalization Plan* in 1977. Mayor Young’s comprehensive five-year plan for revitalizing the city included repurposing abandoned areas of the riverfront for general public use through public and private investment. The Plan was presented to President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) in June of 1977 by an alliance of business and local government officials that included General Motors Corporation Chairman Thomas A. Murphy, City Council president Carl Levin, and U.S. Representative Charles Diggs as a sign of solidarity for the ambitious 2.5 billion dollar project. On October 31, 1979 the public was presented the *Executive Summary of the Linked Riverfront Parks Project*.

Due to the close professional association between Mayor Young and President Carter Detroit was well positioned to capitalize on the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) funding package to assist American cities. The UDAG program was created by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1977 to promote economic development to distressed cities and urban counties through the stimulation of private investment, which would create permanent jobs and expand the tax base. Mayor Young believed that capturing these funds would help Detroit take major steps to transform significant portions of the historic riverfront from industrial use to public recreational use, which would then spur economic development. Detroit successfully received “\$107 million in grants, more than any other city in the nation, for sixteen development projects, many of them along the riverfront.”⁶

⁶ Young, Coleman and Lonnie Wheeler. *Hard Stuff: The Autobiography of Mayor Coleman Young*. Page 225.

Chene Park

Mayor Young's *Moving Detroit Forward...for Urban Economic Revitalization Plan* made commitment to "re-establish the waterfront as the physical image of the city,"⁷ and called for a riverfront outdoor music theater component to be included within the Linked Riverfront Parks Project. He envisioned an urban waterfront music venue that would rival the suburban Pine Knob Theater⁸ to support Detroit's rich musical heritage and entertainment industry. Detroit's 1981 Riverfront Redevelopment Plan included a \$1.2 million budget to redevelop Chene Park with an updated amphitheater and pavilion that would allow for larger acts. Chene Park proved to be the ideal choice for Detroit's first riverfront entertainment venue with its scenic location. The stage is ideally located near the Detroit River's edge, offering patrons sweeping views of Canada and boaters floating behind the stage area.

A Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant⁹ provided funds to purchase three water related outdoor recreation sites on the Detroit River. Detroit used a portion of the \$2.3 million grant to acquire seven parcels along the Detroit River that became the single Chene Park parcel in 1979. The seven purchased lots once included French granted land from the original ribbon farms of the Chene, Campau and Dubois families. These three sites or nodes¹⁰ were named for their locations at the foot of Chene, St. Aubin and Mr. Elliott streets and were to be constructed in phases starting with the Chene site, which required the least amount of prep work because it lacked buildings and was used mostly for storage. The three parks were to be linked for pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles via pathways, parking and public transportation access.

Ground breaking for the park occurred on June 16, 1982 with Detroit Councilwoman Erma Henderson, Mayor Young and Detroit Recreation Department Director Daniel Krichbaum officiating. As the lead project landscape architect, David Schervish "treated the park as an environmental sculpture"¹¹ and contoured the flat parcel with berms to disguise the remaining concrete companies that still flanked each side. Despite the early 1980s recession with double digit interest rates the project moved slowly forward. Chene Park opened in 1984 and was expanded a short time later in 1986 and again in 1990.

Mayor Young's idea that the tax base would be increased if the city converted the riverfront with public and private money was materialized. Hart Plaza was one of the first of his riverfront endeavors, completed in 1975, and drew 6.5 million visitors to its ethnic festivals and other events like the annual fireworks show within five years.¹² By the fall of 1987, the \$20 million in public

⁷ Executive Summary Linked Riverfront Parks Project. Pg. 1.

⁸ Now known as DTE Energy Music Theater in Clarkston, Michigan.

⁹ Detroit Free Press. *U.S. Aid Due for Rink on Belle Isle*. 29 Nov 1975.

¹⁰ Nodes are activity centers related to development and recreational use. (Urban Planning term)

¹¹ The Detroit News. *Chene Park: success in the city*. 2 Oct 1984.

¹² Detroit Free Press. *Downtown's on the Upswing*. 2 Oct 1981.

funds within the Linked Riverfront Parks Project limits had stimulated nearly \$220 million in private funds for housing, office and commercial recreation development.¹³

Ron Alpern was hired by the Detroit Recreation Department as the Chene Park Programs Coordinator in 1984. Alpern's efforts to market Chene Park as a "festival park" featured both performing and visual arts. Unlike Hart Plaza that featured free public programming, Chene Park's original vision was to be a ticketed venue like Pine Knob Theater, but covenants were placed on the property as a result of the funding and required a percentage of the programming to be free for citizens. Alpern successfully garnered contributions from major businesses like Ford Motor Company, Stroh Brewery and Coca-Cola Bottlers of Detroit, who sponsored concerts and special events. A free Saturday Children's series was offered for several summers that included music, magic, storytellers and puppeteering. In 1985, the Detroit Recreation Department was awarded the Michigan Recreation and Park Association Innovative Park Resource Award for his contribution to Chene Park programming.

In addition to the Park's main emphasis as a performing arts venue, the Detroit Recreation Department included a visual arts component. To support marketing efforts on a limited budget and to keep the new park in the public light, bike tours showcasing the riverfront used Chene Park as its starting location. With the assistance from the Junior League of Detroit and the Michigan Council of the Arts, Chene Park became the site of arts exhibits. In the summer of 1984, an "Artist in Residence" program was held using the newly prepped site as a blank canvas for showcasing pieces of art in collaboration with the Detroit Artist Market. Artists were on hand each weekend between June and August to educate visitors about their art. After the program was completed the two pieces of artwork on display in Chene Park were purchased and remain on display.

Jazz has played the pronounced role of musical concerts since opening in 1984. Jazz guitarist Ron English was the headliner act for the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony with Mayor Young on August 10, 1984 and Chene Park was one of several concert venues during the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1986. Other noted jazz artists include saxophonist Ornette Coleman and singer Carmen McRae who drew more than 5,000 people with a standing room only crowd. The Detroit jazz station WJZZ was a regular sponsor for jazz events and a Wednesday Night Jazz Series has become a tradition under the direction of The Right Productions CEO and President Shahida Mausi and has been held every functional year of the park's existence.

Renowned talent such as Smokey Robinson, B-52s, Manhattan Transfer, Anne Murray, Robin Thick, Miles Davis, and Aretha Franklin have performed at Chene Park. The comedian Sinbad was the opening act on the 4th of July, 1990, after the last expansion grand opening. Classical music has also been an important musical component and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra played in Chene Park after Ford Auditorium was closed. The free Special Sundays Program featured orchestra music, folk, blues, bluegrass and a variety of other world music and dancing.

¹³ Saperstein, Harriet. *Recreation Department Leads the Way*. Michigan Planner. Fall 1987.

The Aretha Franklin Amphitheater has an annual attendance of 150,000 people each year and it has achieved international acclaim as one of the world's highest ranked amphitheaters.¹⁴ In August 2018, numerous artists from Motown, Rhythm & Blues (R&B), Jazz, Bluegrass, Folk, Gospel, and Dance gathered at Chene Park to pay tribute to Aretha Franklin with a free concert the night before her funeral. On December 5, 2018, Chene Park was officially renamed the Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park by Detroit City Council. The Aretha Franklin Amphitheater will host an Aretha Jazz Series on Wednesdays during the 2019 season.

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture Firm: Schervish, Vogel, Merz

Schervish, Vogel, Merz PC (also known as SVM) was a Detroit-based architecture and landscape architecture firm established in 1978 with a special emphasis on urban planning and historic preservation. Notable projects include the renovation of the McGregor Carriage House on Woodbridge Street in the Rivertown-Warehouse District for their business office as well as developments in Harmonie Park and Marina Village, Atwater Landing Revitalization and the Lofts at Rivertown.¹⁵ In 1995 the firm was sold to Albert Kahn and Associates.

SVM worked on the Linked Riverfront Parks Project for twelve years that included the original planning, construction, and the major expansion completed in 1990. Rainy Hamilton is credited with the design of the Chene Park pavilion after he graduated from the University of Detroit Architecture School and joined the firm, later becoming a partner. Each principal took on the role as principal-in-charge and project designer of one of the linked parks after working on the Master Plan together for a year. David Schervish was the lead for Chene Park, Stephen Vogel-St. Aubin Park (now the William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor) and Charles Merz-Mt. Elliott Park.

Each park reflects a different aspect of the Detroit River. Chene Park relates a connection between its past industrial landscape and its connection to modern architecture. St. Aubin Park (now part of William L. Milliken State Park and Harbor) celebrates Detroit's Great Lakes traditions and history through a series of interpretive elements and display, like "The Black Presence in Detroit" commemorative wall. Mt. Elliott Park focuses on the industrial history of Detroit.

SVM has received several accolades for Chene Park over time including awards for its design from the Detroit and Michigan Chapters of the American Institute of Architects, the Michigan American Society of Landscape Architects and the Michigan Society of Planning Officials. In 1987 SVM received the prestigious Detroit American Institute of Architects Allied Arts Award and in 2019 the Michigan American Institute of Architects 25 Year Honor Award.

¹⁴ By Pollstar, a trade publication for the music industry.

¹⁵ The 1989 adaptive reuse of a former pharmaceutical complex to condominiums. Frederick Stearns Building (1989) located at 6533 East Jefferson.

Description

Overall the park has an organic sculptural feeling. Circles, semicircles and wave patterns are used to connect the river to the land. The landscape architects' vision of linking the park from the Renaissance Center to Belle Isle suggest its past relationship to an industrial landscape and a new connection to modern architecture of the Renaissance Center.¹⁶ Walkways curve and flow around the property allowing for visitors to pause for scenic vistas of the interplay of the property landscape, artworks, and views of the Detroit River and Canada beyond. Earth berms, on each side of the park, once used to provide screening for the past industries that once occupied the riverfront, have slowly been purchased and are being converted to public use. Mature trees planted as part of the original design suggest the riverfront has always been a natural landscape. A semicircular pond covers approximately two-thirds of the frontage with East Atwater Street making the connection to Bloody Run Creek that once flowed into the Detroit River nearby, but has since been enclosed and incorporated into the modern sewer system.¹⁷

The Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District is approached at the intersection of East Atwater and Chene streets by a circular *Entry Plaza* that is then connected to a straight promenade labeled *The Mall* leading to the circular *Festival Plaza* near the edge of the Detroit River.¹⁸ The entry plaza consists of a series of circular concrete slabs with six concentric circles of varied width in natural shades of dark gray, beige, and white. There are six total planters approximately two feet high in the circle constructed of rough textured concrete, three on each side consisting of two square planters separated with an arched planter. The circular patterns are reminiscent of the concrete silos that served as inspiration for the architects and the rough textured concrete is intentionally used throughout the park on planters, wall, and stairs to simulate the surfaces of the Renaissance Center.¹⁹ Removable bollards at the front of the Entry Plaza provide security and prevent vehicles from entering the property when in place.

Meandering pathways and landscaping along the venue, pond and riverfront complete the park and tie the entire landscape together. Pathways are well-lit and lined with the same lampposts found along the Mall, pavilion and riverfront. A paved area in back of the stage can be used for special event accommodations directly adjacent to the river. Numerous round concrete planters approximately one to three feet high are found along walkways and are constructed of gray rough textured concrete. Berms flank each side of the property and were planted with mature deciduous and evergreen trees taken from the Rouge Park Nursery to help buffer the park with its industrial neighbors when it was originally constructed.

¹⁶ Email from David Schervish 26 Mar 2019.

¹⁷ Stephen Vogel interview. The only remaining section of Bloody Run Creek that has not been enclosed and integrated into the sewer system is in Elmwood Cemetery near Mt. Elliott and E. Lafayette Streets.

¹⁸ Entry Plaza, The Mall, and Festival Plaza are the place names referred to in the 1986 Expansion Plans that were completed in 1990.

¹⁹ Interview with David Schervish and Rainy Hamilton 15 Feb 2019.

Beyond the Entry Plaza entrance, the Mall continues straight southeast to the river and consists of a small three foot high silver wave-shaped directional sign on the right side. The sign is marked “Chene Park” and points toward the main gated entrance. The walkway consists of large gray and white rectangular slabs of concrete in an offset wave pattern, separated by perpendicular bands of dark gray concrete. The Mall is well lit with eight silver metal lampposts, four on each side, eight silver metal triple seat benches, four on each side and two silver metal trash receptacles. Lampposts are approximately ten feet high and consist of a shaft with a flat LED light mounted on a four prong head. Benches are silver metal with three seats separated with arched circle armrests. Trash receptacles are vented with vertical cutouts to resemble the rough textured concrete. The grassy area flanking the plazas and the Mall are utilized for vendors to set up tables and erect tent structures to line the pathways during events. A manmade berm with mature trees and plantings extends the length of the Mall, which ends at the Festival Plaza near the edge of the Detroit River. A large six foot high silver wave-shaped directional sign on the left side between the Mall and Festival Plaza announces the river promenade area. The Festival Plaza is similar, but slightly smaller than the Entry Plaza with only five concentric circles of dark beige, dark and light gray. The 1984 three-piece artwork *Carnival* by John Piet is showcased in the center circle.

To the east of Festival Plaza are eight small, medium, and large white rectangular slabs separated by gray perpendicular bands used for special event seating and dining. The first three medium sized slabs have a centered elevated landscaping area approximately two feet high like the Entry Plaza with rough textured concrete and are slightly offset halfway into the slab. There are ten lampposts and two trash receptacles similar to those located on The Mall. A small three foot high silver wave-shaped directional sign on the left side is next to a ten foot long square concrete bench approximately one and a half feet square.

A manmade L-shaped freeform shaped pond runs parallel to East Atwater Street for 450 feet before turning toward the Detroit River for an additional 300 feet. A fountain is located in the center of the 300 foot stretch of the pond. The pond fronting East Atwater Street provides a barrier from the street and was later incorporated with fencing and gateways that help secure the stage and amphitheater areas. An *Exit Plaza* on the far west side of the pond and just outside the fence was added as part of the 1986 expansion at Dubois Street with three concentric circles of white, beige, and dark gray and outlined by a short two-foot wall of rough textured concrete and fronted with the same removable steel bollards as the entry plaza. A back gate on the west side of the property provides access to the City of Detroit Water & Sewage Department building and administrative office.

The Entry Plaza, the Mall, Festival Plaza and the area east of Festival Plaza are ungated and have flowing walkways along the pond near the gated entrance and a promenade along the edge of the Detroit River. The promenade fence along the River is mounted to the 1982 seawall that was the park’s first improvement. The fence is constructed of vertically oriented horizontal panels supported between silver metal cylinders.

The main entrance to the Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District consists of a gate secured by metal bars that leads to a fenced area west of Festival Plaza and between the pond and Detroit River. Just inside the fenced area is a small oval one-story concrete building for selling merchandise. A second piece of artwork from 1984, *Lattice Form* by Raymond L. Katz is located immediately to the right in front of the multi-level pavilion. Walkways inside the gated area are of natural gray concrete and organically flow to and from the amphitheater area and along the pond and rear perimeter of the property.

Located in the southwest quadrant of the parcel is the prominent covered amphitheater and pavilion structure that are connected by a 40-foot tall hill that slopes downward to the stage area.²⁰ The amphitheater consists of a round flat 30 foot concrete stage flanked by two twenty-foot wings at ground-level with a metal fence blocking off access to the Detroit River. The stage is covered by a large Teflon coated–fiberglass tensile structure supported by four rough textured gray concrete support columns that act as the base for the main stage house framework and mechanical space. The fixed seating is covered by the tensile structure which is supported by nine inverted “V” concrete structures along the outside, seven at the top of the hill create a fan-shaped roof structure and one on each side help anchor each side. Inside and underneath the tensile roof structure are three fixed slightly-diagonal steel support towers that are fluted at the top and provide a catwalk and open half cage area for mounting the lighting and audio equipment.

The asymmetrical multi-level pavilion is directly adjacent and north of the amphitheater and consists of a series of circular and semicircular concrete structure segments. It is arranged with multiple stacked round silo-shaped structures with exterior gray rough texture concrete finishes and houses the concession stands, restroom facilities, private event space and mechanical operations. Between the period of 1984 and 1990, the pavilion was expanded from three-levels to five-levels with four new concession and two new restroom facilities that extended the original accommodations seven-fold.²¹ Dressing rooms for the performers were moved from the bottom level floor of the pavilion to the administrative building when it was built circa 2000. The pavilion pattern slopes up and over the crest of the hill with hardscape areas of solid rough textured cylinders resembling piers that slope down to the pond framing the landscaped area. This area once featured a water feature but is now closed. A treble clef note by artist Keith Jackson from 2018 is near the bottom by the pathway.

On the east elevation, a ticket booth currently stands at the southeast corner of Chene and East Atwater Streets and is a green rectangular, steel and composition board, one-story flat roofed building on a slab foundation. The ticket booth façade has three ticket windows, a door, and two signs denoting it is Chene Park and the Chene Park Box Office. Located to the right of the entry is a fifteen foot high venue sign revealed on May 17, 2019 labeled with the newly renamed *Aretha Franklin Amphitheater*. The park was renamed for the famous singer by Detroit City Council on November 15, 2018. The dark gray metal sign is topped with a wave detail followed by the name above a changeable electronic billboard.

²⁰ The 15 foot hill was first created in 1984 using dirt fill from the adjacent pond, and concrete rubble salvaged from the recently demolished Dodge Main Plant that was capped with clay. The hill was expanded to the current 40 feet by 1990 utilizing soil from the construction of the nearby St. Aubin marina.

²¹ Riverfront Music Theater at Chene Park Fact Sheet and Media Release. June 1990.

On the west elevation of the parcel is an *Exit Plaza* located between the fence and East Atwater Street immediately west of the pond. The *Exit Plaza* has three concentric circles of dark gray, beige and white concrete and removable bollards for limiting vehicle access. Immediately west of the *Exit Plaza* are two buildings accessed via a mechanical gate and roadway leading off East Atwater Street. A circa 2000 one-story building operated by the City of Detroit Water and Sewage Department is comprised of light-beige concrete block and capped with a turquoise-colored metal roof with glass block windows forming a triangle in the gables. Directly adjacent to the building is the administrative office for the park located next to the Detroit River. The administrative building is a rectangle building with a half round building added to the length of the rectangle building which faces the river. The recessed main entry to the administrative building faces west and houses the offices of the venue operator, The Right Productions. The administrative building consists of four rooms in the half circle area and four dressing rooms in the back rectangular section of the building.

Art Objects

Two of the art objects are original to the 1984 opening of Chene Park. The artworks were part of a twelve artists' sculpture exhibit, *Installation/Outdoor Sites*, hosted May 26-June 23, 1984 in Chene Park. In collaboration with the project landscape architect, David Schervish and an advisory committee, five of the pieces were considered for permanent residency. The two pieces available for viewing were selected from the field of five.²²

Carnival by John Piet (1984)

Located near the edge of the Detroit River at the end of the main entry promenade, in the ungated section of the park, *Carnival* is an eighteen foot tall three-part polychrome steel sculpture. Circular and semicircular motifs connect those same motifs that served as the inspiration for Chene Park. It was originally painted blue, green and red but is now painted light gray.

John Piet (1946-) received art degrees from the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts (name changed to Center for Creative Studies in 1975 and Wayne State University. Piet taught art at Macomb County Community College from 1976 to 2010.

Lattice Form by Raymond L. Katz (1984)

Located just inside the main gate to the right is *Lattice Form*, a white, nine and a half foot tall, semi-circular steel lattice artwork. *Lattice Form* follows the semi-circular theme alongside the similar lines of the pavilion directly adjacent. The see-through quality of the artwork is used to enjoy views of the river and landscaping behind the piece.

²² Detroit Recreation Department Artworks Inventory. Three ring binder.

Raymond L. Katz (1938-) received a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from Wayne State University in 1968 and his pieces are typically credited to Ray Katz. He has had a prolific career and fabricated numerous public sculpture artworks that were displayed in several states and countries, including Japan and France. Katz specializes in abstract art and he prefers to work with metal for its durability and beauty.²³

Two recent pieces of art that are noncontributing to the proposed historic district are a three foot high treble clef note near the base of the pavilion by Keith Jackson placed in 2018 as part of local Detroit Council of the Arts grant. In addition, a chair from the estate of Dr. Maya Angelou (1928-2014) resides in The Right Production office of CEO Shahida Mausi with a handmade book for cultivating special memories of those invited to sit in Dr. Angelou’s inspirational chair.

CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The following resources are identified as contributing and non-contributing to the Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Historic District-See Site Map on Page 16.

Contributing resources

A	Entry Plaza
C	The Mall
D	Festival Plaza
E	Artwork- <i>Carnival</i>
F	Pond
G	Artwork- <i>Lattice Form</i>
H	Pavilion
I	Tensile Roof
J	Stage
M	Exit Plaza

Non-contributing resources

B	Ticket Booth
K	Administrative Office
L	Water & Sewage Building

CRITERIA

The proposed historic district appears to meet the National Register Criteria A at a local level:

²³ http://raykatzsculptor.com/studio/artist_statement. Accessed 22 March 2019.

- A) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and

Furthermore, the proposed historic district meets the National Register Criterion Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within The Last Fifty Years and appears to meet the exceptional importance rule for its significance as the culmination of twentieth century urban planning theories to reclaim and redevelop the Detroit Riverfront for public use and support economic development by enhancing the local entertainment industry with a riverfront music venue.

COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine members, who are residents of Detroit, and two ex-officio members. The appointed members are Melanie Bazil, Naomi Beasley-Porter, Carolyn Carter, Keith Dye, Louis Fisher, Zené Fogel-Gibson, Theresa Holder-Hagood, Calvin Jackson, and Joseph Rashid. The ex-officio members, who may be represented by members of their staff, are the Director of the City Planning Commission and the Director of the Planning and Development Department. Ad hoc members for this study are Bernice Leatherwood and Harriet Saperstein.

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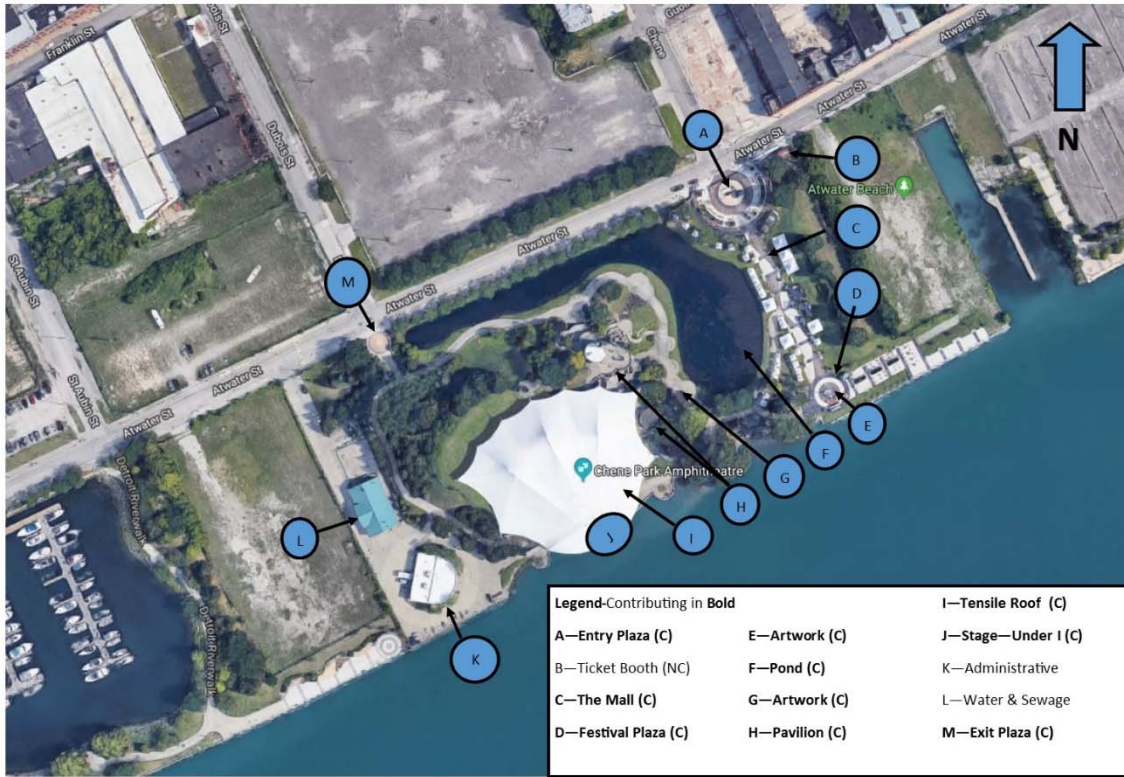
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SITE MAP AND PICTURES

Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park Site Map



Source: Google Maps, accessed April 1, 2019



(A) Entry Plaza-looking south (B) Ticket Booth – far left



(C)The Mall-looking south



(D) Festival Plaza with the *Carnival (E)* by John Piet in center



(F) Pond serving as a buffer from the amphitheater- looking southwest



(G) *Lattice Form* by Raymond L. Katz – looking southeast



(H) Pavilion-Looking south



(I) Tensile Roof over Fixed Seating-Looking south



(J) Stage with added wings-note stage house overhead for tensile roof base



(K) Administrative Office



(L) Water & Sewage Department Building - looking southeast



(M) Exit Plaza – looking east