

East Riverfront Assets Study (ERAS)

Project Background

About the Detroit Riverfront

Like many cities during the nineteenth century, Detroit's riverfront was an industrial and economic engine, helping to drive the city's rapid growth and urbanization. The evolution of the riverfront has been marked by trade, manufacturing and shipping.

Today the Detroit riverfront has been transformed and was recently named Best Riverwalk in America in the 2021 USA TODAY 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards contest. Leading the redevelopment of the riverfront is the non-profit Detroit RiverFront Conservancy (DRFC), that manages and operates various parks from the Ambassador Bridge to the McArthur Bridge. While the DRFC is responsible for those sites, the City manages and operates other well-known and emerging parks along the riverfront including:

- Fort Wayne
- Riverside Park
- Hart Plaza
- Owen Park
- Erma Henderson Park and Marina
- Riverside Marina
- St. Jean Boat Launch
- Maheras Gentry Park
- AB Ford Park
- Lakewood East
- Mariners Park



About the Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan

Every five years the City of Detroit undergoes a process to update its Parks & Recreation Plan and is currently in the first phase of an 18-month project to undertake that task. In this phase information is gathered to learn what residents' future priorities and goals are for parks and recreation in Detroit, as well as to connect residents with existing programs and resources. To help achieve this Parks & Recreation is launching a citywide survey, conducting a community needs assessment and attending community meetings across the City. This information-gathering phase is anticipated to last until early 2021. Then the Parks & Recreation staff will review what has been learned and begin the analyzing and prioritizing process in phase two of the plan update.

About the East Riverfront Assets Study (ERAS)

Under the goal of updating the Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan, the Parks & Recreation Division is taking a focused look at the parks between Hart Plaza and St. Jean through a planning study. The East Riverfront Assets Study (ERAS) aims to:

- Learn how Detroiters use these sites now and how they envision them in the future
- Develop a connective vision and actionable plan for creating vibrant, sustainable destinations along the riverfront
- Consider unique features of each park and connect opportunities to create a continuous riverfront experience
- Assess the current condition of all sites included in the study. (See below.)
- Determine what needs to be fixed and how much those repairs will cost
- Revisit and build upon past studies completed by partner agencies such as the 2018 East RiverFront Framework Plan
- Collect and use input from community stakeholders to help shape a final strategic plan

Sites Included in the ERAS

Sites included in the ERAS are grouped by their shared characteristics as follows:

The Civic Center

These properties are highly visible, active public spaces in downtown Detroit, managed and operated by the City. Combined, these sites make up approximately 15.5 acres and have historically served as venues for festivals, summer concerts and civic demonstrations.

Hart Plaza contains important sculptures and monuments including the Dodge Fountain, designed by Isamu Noguchi. In its current state, Hart Plaza presents challenges as a public space and venue due to the plaza's extensive paved surfaces and lack of green areas.

Spirit Plaza is a public space that was recently established at the intersection of Woodward Avenue and Jefferson Avenue, across from the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center. The space received infrastructure improvements in 2019.

The Joe Louis Fist is an iconic sculpture that sits in the median at Jefferson Avenue. It is a popular, if somewhat difficult to access, tourist destination.

The Aretha Franklin Amphitheater (formerly Chene Park)

Renamed in 2019 to honor the Queen of Soul, The Aretha Franklin Amphitheater is a 6,000-seat venue located at the riverfront (about 1.5 miles from Downtown). The venue hosts summer concert series, graduations, and other entertainment events. The City is currently investing in seawall improvements. The venue is managed and operated by The Right Productions.

The Gold Coast/ Joseph Barry Subdivision Parks

Erma Henderson Marina and Park is a 36-acre property along the river that features approximately 243 boat slips, basketball courts, pavilions, and a small park to the east. In recent years, the City has invested in various improvements including extensive horticultural gardens, comfort station renovations, a new

playground and basketball courts, as well as seawall and dock repairs.

Owen Park to the east of Erma Henderson Marina is an 8-acre park space adjacent to residential developments. The park currently lacks amenities but is heavily used for fishing.

Jefferson Village*, Riverside Marina and St. Jean Boat Launch

Jefferson Village* is a neighborhood made up of detached single-family housing, completed in 2007. The residential development was completed through the Neighborhood Development Corporation for the City of Detroit. There are two condominium associations in this area. A third phase was partially started but not completed due to the Housing Crisis in 2009/2010. However public infrastructure already exists to support future development. A significant amount of public land remains to the south between the new construction and the marinas.

Riverside Marina is located on the Detroit River at 11000 Freud St. and offers a wide range of amenities such as hundreds of seasonal boat slips, an outdoor pool, tennis courts and banquet facilities.

The St. Jean Boat Launch is a property on the Detroit River that offers three docks, six launch ramps, truck and trailer parking, lighting and a facility with an office and restroom. The property operates seasonally and is fenced and gated.

*Jefferson Village is a residential area included as part of this study due to its adjacency to Riverside Marina.

