The Detroit RiverWalk
Welcoming to All, With Benefits to All!

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WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF DETROIT?
AUTO INDUSTRY
MANUFACTURING
DETROIT METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY
SPORTS!
PUBLIC ART
AVAILABLE LAND
Metropolitan Detroit has Experienced a Number of Paradigm Shifts

Paradigm Shift = a significant change in thinking that results in a completely changed view or outlook
FUR TRADE – DETROIT’S FIRST PARADIGM SHIFT

- The height of the Fur Trade was in 1700s and 1800s
- Hundreds of thousands of beaver skins were exported annually
SHIP BUILDING PARADIGM SHIFT

- During the 1890s more ships were built along the Detroit River than any other city in America
- On December 3, 1819 the Detroit River was declared a public highway by Act of Congress
AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURING
PARADIGM SHIFT
During WWII President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the need to supply implements of war and called for the United States to become the great “Arsenal of Democracy”
CONSEQUENCES

- Frequently, there are unintended consequences of paradigm shifts
- The fur trade paradigm shift led to the virtual extinction of the beaver in our region
- The “Arsenal of Democracy” paradigm shift resulted in substantial oil pollution
Oil Pollution

- In 1946-1948, 5.9 million gallons of oil & other petroleum products were discharged into the Rouge and Detroit rivers each year.
- Enough to pollute the entire western basin of Lake Erie.
LAKE ERIE IS DEAD!

August 20, 1965
Citizen Protest in the 1960s
Raw Sewage and Industrial Waste Dumped Into the River
The Rouge River Caught on Fire in 1969
THE MERCURY CRISIS OF 1970
Earth Day 1970
Environmental Awakening

Catalysts:
- Winter waterfowl die-offs in 1960 and 1967
- Silent Spring
- Eutrophication of Lake Erie
- Burning of the Rouge and Cuyahoga rivers
- Mercury Crisis of 1970

Led to:
- Earth Day in 1970
- Canada Water Act in 1970
- U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972
- Canada-U.S. GLWQA of 1972
- U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973
Substantial reductions in oil discharges and spills have occurred, and winter duck kills due to oil pollution have been eliminated.

Billions of dollars have been spent on municipal wastewater treatment and virtually all plants in Michigan and Ontario are achieving 2\textsuperscript{o} treatment.

90\% decline in phosphorus concentration and loading from the Detroit WWTP.

Since 1960 there has been an over 80\% reduction in untreated CSO volume from communities in southeast Michigan.
Between the 1960s and 1980s there was an over 4,000 tonnes/day decrease in chloride loadings to the Detroit River

- 70% decline in mercury and a 90% decline of DDT in fish (yet health advisories remain)
- 90% decline in DDE and 85% decline in PCBs in herring gull eggs

- Over one million m$^3$ of contaminated sediment remediated at a cost of over $154$ million
THESE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS ARE HEARTENING, BUT THAT IS NOT THE BEST PART OF THE STORY!
Ecological Recovery

- 25 active Bald Eagle nests after a 25-year absence
- Peregrine Falcons back and fledging 30 young
- Osprey nested in Gibraltar in 2009 – the first time in Wayne County since 1890s
- Sturgeon reproduction documented in 2001 – the first time in 30 years
- Whitefish spawning documented in the Detroit River in 2006 – first time since 1916

- In the 1970s, the walleye population was in crisis; today we are considered part of the “Walleye Capital of the World”
- Beaver are back in at least six locations in the watershed
One of the Most Remarkable Ecological Recovery Stories in North America!
Environmental and Natural Resource Challenges

- Population growth, transportation expansion, and land use changes
- Habitat and loss and degradation
- Nonpoint source pollution
- Toxic substances contamination
- Introduction of exotic species
- Greenhouse gases and climate change
Detroit Made the River its Backdoor
For over a century, city planners identified the highest and best use of the waterfront was “industrial”

Detroit was an industrial town and it had a working riverfront that supported industry and commerce

And the Detroit River was perceived as just a working river in the industrial heartland
- Fewer people and industries
- Much underutilized and undervalued riverfront land
- Out of the convergence of growing public and private support to gain access to the Detroit River, revival of the river, new designations as American and Canadian Heritage Rivers, and the establishment of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge came an opportunity to re-envision the downtown Detroit waterfront as a gathering place for both people and wildlife
Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

- Established in 2003
- 501 c 3 organization
- Public-private partnership
- 44-member Board of Directors
- Vision: Transform Detroit's international riverfront - the face of the city - into a beautiful, exciting, safe, accessible world-class gathering place for all
“BEAUTIFUL, EXCITING, SAFE, ACCESSIBLE...
...WORLD-CLASS GATHERING PLACE...
...FOR ALL."
$110 million raised in the first 10 years

In addition, $40 million invested in an endowment to operate, care, maintain, and steward the Detroit RiverWalk
Before

After – Cullen Plaza

Before

After – Milliken State Park
And It Just Gets Better!
Detroit Riverwalk

- Nearly 80% complete
- 3.5 miles completed
- 3 million annual visitors (surveys have shown that 90% of these visits would not have taken place without the riverfront improvements)
- City’s most attractive feature
- Open every day, free, welcoming to all, and rapidly becoming a major tourist attraction
- The Detroit RiverWalk is rapidly becoming the iconographic image of Detroit in the 21st Century and a key supporting element in Detroit’s revival
## Economic Benefits (CSL International, 2013)

**CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riverfront construction and land value</td>
<td>$1.548 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portion attributable to riverfront</td>
<td>$639 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction period jobs</td>
<td>16,700</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ANNUAL IMPACTS**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total annual spending by visitors, residents, and employees</td>
<td>$43.7 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combined annual spending: 2003-2013</td>
<td>$360.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual positive media value</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual jobs</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total annual tax revenue generation</td>
<td>$4.5 million</td>
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**TOTAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE FIRST 10 YEARS - $1 BILLION**
GM READING & RHYTHM ON THE RIVERFRONT
GM RIVER DAYS
MOONLIGHT YOGA
RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS
SLOW ROLL ON THE CUT
PUBLIC ART
HARVESTFEST
IN THE D
The Detroit RiverWalk is welcoming to all and is striving to achieve benefits to all!

- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Detroit was the epicenter of the fur trade, an unparalleled leader of ship building for 100 years, the “Silicon Valley” of the industrial age, and the unquestioned leader of the Arsenal of Democracy.

- Detroit is a city of innovation, resilience, and leadership in responding to paradigm shifts.

- We have now entered the sustainability paradigm shift.

- Detroit has the ability to be a leader of sustainability paradigm shift, pivoting as it has at each previous paradigm shift, to redefine itself and lead the nation and world down a more sustainable path.
Thank you!