

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS SUMMARY

Introduction

As part of The Kresge Foundation's KIP:D+ grant, Friends of Rouge Park (FORP) hosted four Community Conversations engaging with different community organizations, park user groups, the City of Detroit, and local schools. Identified during a Partner Mapping activity, these groups were identified as those with the closest geographical or programmatic proximity to the core of Rouge Park. With an 81.25% participation rate, 26 FORP partners participated in Community Conversations, as well as several separate 1:1 deeper dives with organizations.

Partners were invited to attend one Community Conversation hosted virtually over Zoom or in person at a campfire hosted at Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association in the core of Rouge Park. Partners were invited to share their connection with the park and were guided through a SOAR Analysis and series of questions to better understand their experience at Rouge Park, and why this matters in terms of planning.

SOAR Analysis

The purpose of the SOAR analysis is to better understand the Partners' experience with the core of Rouge Park, how we can work together to revitalize this shared area, and what gaps in opportunities exist as barriers or challenges to change. Partners also discussed aspirations and dreams for future park planning. A planning tool, the SOAR analysis helps us vision and dream towards a more collaborative future, together.

Below are the aggregate responses from our Community Conversations which help shape next steps of engagement.

SOAR ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Quotation marks denote direct quotes, *italisized* text are summarized themes.



Strengths

What is going well at Rouge Park?

What do you want to keep happening or seeing at the park?

- "Every time I come [to visit the Buffalo Soldiers], there are people visiting, always people here. The guys are such an asset!"
- *The Buffalo Soldiers provide a positive and **welcoming space**.*
- *I feel safe when I visit the park*
- *Rouge Park offers a variety of ways to engage with nature and be in the woods while still being in Detroit*
- *Friends of Rouge Park is a great asset to have here in the park*
- "Rouge Park is great for young people"
- *Rouge Park is a great place for sports all in one place*
- *Rouge Park is a place for interaction with nature and trails*

Opportunities

Where do opportunities exist for change?

Where do gaps in services or activities exist?

What opportunities for programming exist?

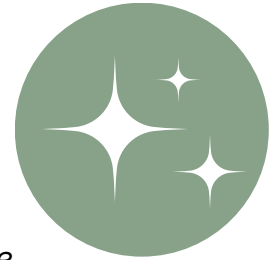


- *There are opportunities to educate community members about the features of the park*
- "Create protected bike Lanes on Outer Drive"
- *Create parking in Rouge Park with specific amenities*
- "Develop a way to track park visitors, to know how each space is being used"
- *Engage more regularly with park visitors through park outreach*
- *Work with local schools in involve youth in park activities and programs*
- *Opportunity to revamp the Amphitheater project*
- *Utilize the park to connect youth to STE(A)M-based programming to learn about science, technology, engineering, and math.*

SOAR ANALYSIS FINDINGS

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Aspirations



What do you hope for as it relates to the core of Rouge Park?

- *Creation of indoor riding arena at Buffalo Soldiers barn area*
- *Transform the administration building into co-op campus*
- *Collaborate with more non-profits to bring programming to the park*
- *"Return Detroit dollars to Detroit"*
- *Establish an ongoing farmer's market*
- *Bring back traditional ecological species to the park*
- *Dedicated usage for trails: hiking, biking, horseback riding*
- *Amphitheater revamp!*
- *We hope for inter-generational connection to continue our legacy*
- *Intentional partnerships with schools and partner organizations*



Results

What changes or outcomes do you hope are true as a result of revitalizing the core of Rouge Park?

- *Youth are engaged and supported in their interest in learning about nature*
- *Generations are connected in a meaningful way as a result of participating in park programming*
- *"Rouge Park provides the opportunity to meet the needs for children to experience nature and get away from screens"*
- *An improved experience for people who visit Detroit and Rouge Park*
- *The increased connection between individuals*
- *"People experience joy by visiting Rouge Park"*
- *Increased resources related to outdoors jobs/careers*

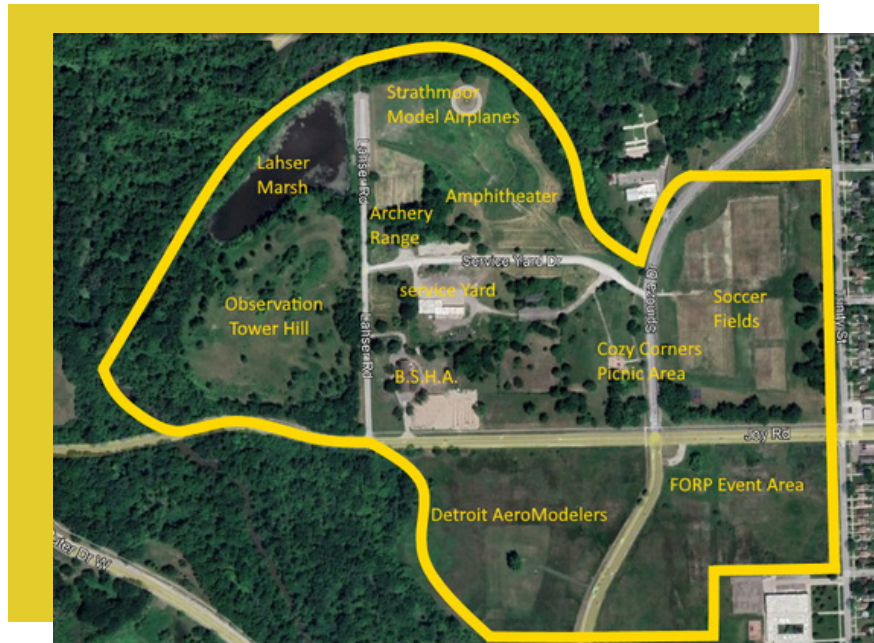
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. FORP should utilize findings from this round of community engagement to make meaningful connections with community partners interested in continuing or starting summer programming near the core of Rouge Park.

2. FORP should continue open lines of communication with community partners to stay in the loop regarding ongoing feedback related to both positive and unintended changes in the park.

3. FORP should create a shared calendar tool with the purpose of a one-stop space for people to stay informed about what is happening in the park.

Core of Rouge Park Map



Community Conversations



Our first bonfire Community Conversation!

THANK YOU!

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS

A special thank you to Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association for hosting our campfire conversations!

Black to the Land Coalition
Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association
Camp Casey
Cody High School
Cody-Rouge Community Action Alliance
Detroit Aero Modelers
Detroit Black Comm. Food Security Network
Detroit City Councilman Fred Durhal
Detroit District 7 Mayor's Office
City of Detroit - GSD
Detroit Public Schools Community District
Dixon Educational Learning Academy
Elite Archery, Inc.
Far West Detroit Civic Association
FORP Board of Directors
Friends of the Rouge
Motor City Mountain Biking Association
Sierra Club/Detroit Outdoors
St. Suzanne Cody Rouge Comm. Resource Ctr.
The Greening of Detroit
US Forest Service
Warrendale Community Organization
West Outer Drive Civic Association
YMCA of Metro Detroit

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