



ROUGE PARK MASTER PLAN

2023





FRIENDS OF ROUGE PARK

The Friends of Rouge Park (FORP) is a non-profit organization founded in 2002 by people passionate about the future of Detroit's largest park. The group advocates for the park, coordinates volunteer work days, sponsors events and develops partnerships to promote park maintenance and development. In 2010, after raising funds for the park, FORP needed a plan for how to prioritize projects for funding. The City of Detroit did not have a Master Plan for the park but were willing to partner with FORP to create one. Relying on volunteer labor and services and a grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation, FORP and the city worked together over four years to complete the plan in 2016.

This Master Plan is a living document and has been updated over the years. Implementation began before it was complete and continues today due to the strong partnerships and generosity of many local and national foundations, corporations and organizations, some of which are included on the right. This updated plan was designed by Eileen Iannone and Julia Schlau who volunteered to put the plan into a presentable format that is easy to read and understand. The hope is that by making our vision readily available to a wide audience, we can continue to work with the community to transform Rouge Park into a safe, well-maintained and beautiful natural space for all to enjoy. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the need for equitable parks and green spaces and deepened our commitment to implementing a shared vision for Rouge Park.

Mission Statement: To advocate for the protection and enhancement of the natural features and habitats found in Rouge Park and to promote existing activities and facilities and appropriate development of future recreational activities.

WWW.ROUGEPARK.ORG

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 Brightmoor Concerned Citizens
 Cody-Rouge Community Action Alliance
 St. Suzanne Cody Rouge Community Resource Center
 Joy Community Association
 Detroit Aero Modelers
 Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association
 Elite Archery, Inc.
 Motor City Mountain Biking Association
 The Greening of Detroit
 Detroit Outdoors
 Friends of the Rouge
 Rocket Community Fund
 National Kidney Foundation of Michigan
 GM Dollars for Doers
 Camp Casey
 Chandler Park Conservancy



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- *Weekends in the Park* program
- 100th Anniversary Celebration





BACKGROUND

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Rouge Park master plan is to guide the redesign and revitalization of Rouge Park, protecting and enhancing its natural areas and providing for the recreational needs of the people.

Redesigned as a destination park rather than pass-through park drive, the goal is for Rouge Park to become a well funded and maintained regional jewel, on par with Belle Isle State Park, the Downtown Riverwalk and the Huron-Clinton Metroparks.

The plan seeks to create a unique *Rouge Park Experience*, an oasis of Nature in a highly urbanized area. A place for people of all ages and backgrounds to leave their cars and take refuge from traffic and concrete to discover the wonders of nature and find solace on the banks of the river and in its forests and prairies. A place for people, not motorists.

With views of downtown from the proposed observation tower and frequent regional events, fairs, festivals and concerts in its central recreation areas, the Friends of Rouge Park envision the park as a popular destination for residents of the metropolitan area as well as an essential stop for any visitor to Detroit.



FRIENDS OF ROUGE PARK ENVISION ROUGE PARK AS AN ESSENTIAL STOP FOR ANY VISITOR TO DETROIT.

“The purpose of the design has been to preserve a beautiful natural environment - free from the rush and the sight of man’s dominating influence. Here is to be preserved a natural landscape.”

- From the original plan for Rouge Park, 1925



HISTORY OF THE PLAN

The Rouge Park Master Plan was driven by the vision and values expressed by members of the Rouge Park community including residents, neighborhood organizations, park user groups, and other stakeholders.

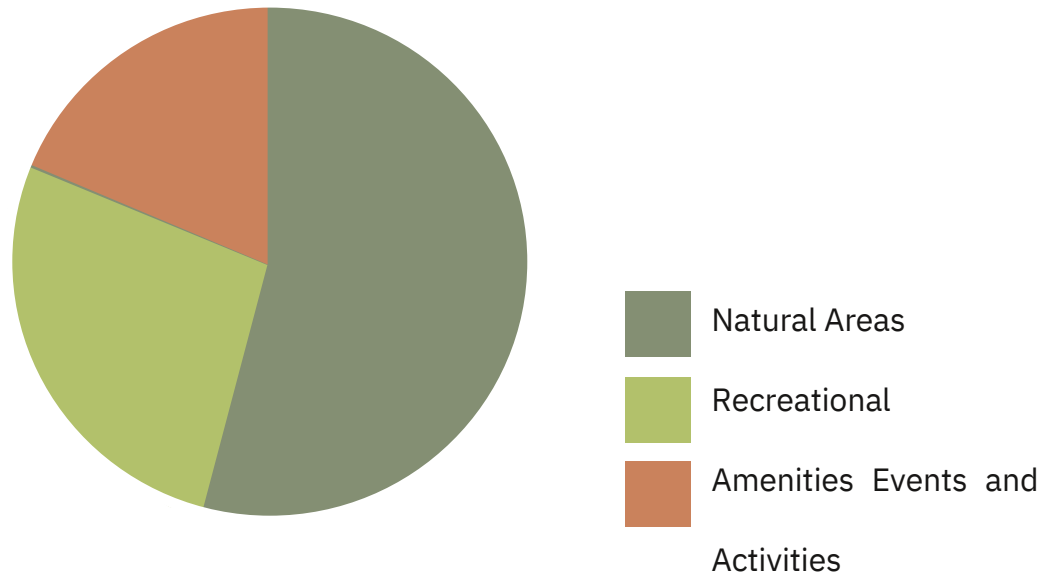
The Friends of Rouge Park provided opportunities for input into the plan beginning with a Community Visioning Session held in May 2011 followed by many community meetings and formal planning assistance from Lawrence Technological University's School of Design.

The community came to a consensus that preservation of, and access to, natural areas was the most important priority for the park, followed by the need for more recreational amenities, and more events and activities for all age groups. Improved regular maintenance of the park was stressed for all three areas.



THE ROUGE PARK MASTER PLAN WAS DRIVEN BY THE VISION AND VALUES EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OF THE ROUGE PARK COMMUNITY.

TOP PRIORITIES OF THE COMMUNITY



The 1925 Park Plan

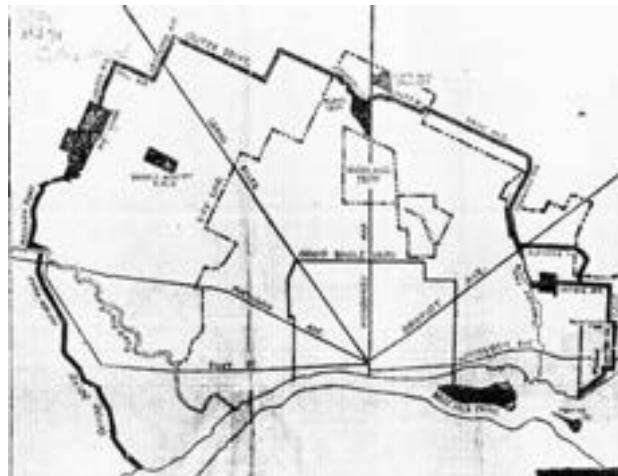
On September 12, 1919, E. G. Heckel, Detroit Commissioner of Parks and Playgrounds, took Mayor Couzens on a tour of the proposed site for a new park that he proclaimed would become Detroit's "largest and finest." Four days later, the Detroit Common Council approved the proposal to establish the 1,203 acre River Rouge Park.

Over the next five years, the City purchased a total of 12 large farms for a total cost of \$1.25 million to assemble the park. Only a few playgrounds and picnic areas were built before the park opened in the summer of 1925.

At the same time that park planner, William McGehee, was working on the design for Rouge Park, another grand city project was underway; the building of the 37 mile Outer Drive. These projects came into conflict as each desired to use the newly acquired land for its purposes. Unfortunately, Rouge Park lost its fight to become a destination park and instead became a hybrid of "park" and "park drive" for the Outer Drive thoroughfare.

By 1929, the roads and the first park amenities were built, including the golf course, the Brennan Pools, tennis courts, toboggan slides and a skating rink, as well as the conversion of the Sorensen Estate into a recreation center.

While the original 1925 called for many more amenities such as an amphitheater, conservatory, polo field, music court, dance pavilion, casino, refectory and more, the Great Depression put a halt to these plans and they were never completed.



The Outer Drive Plan, 1922



HISTORY OF ROUGE PARK



GROWTH 1932-1974



The roads, golf course, pools, tennis courts, toboggan runs, ice rink, ball fields, archery range, picnic areas, and comfort stations are built.

Scout Hollow Campground opens -1934
Annual Soap Box Derby begins -1935



Annual Joe Prance Day Camp begins -1947
Pony Barn opens - 1948
Disabled Children's Program begins -1952



Strathmoor Model Airfield Opens -1952
Nature Center opens -1957
Detroit Aeromodelers Air Field opens -1974



Friends of Rouge Park Founded - 2002

MMBA Mountain Bike Trail Opens - 2006
Kilpatrick Administration proposes selling 115 acres of park; FORP leads effort to stop sale - 2007
Elite Archery renovates Archery Range - 2002
Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association and D-Town Farms open - 2008
Growing Together Statue completed - 2009
Bing Administration proposes closing park; FORP leads effort to stop the closign - 2010
Prairie Pathway opens - 2010



1920

1940

1960

1980

2000

2020

1919

Common Council approves site for future Rouge Park

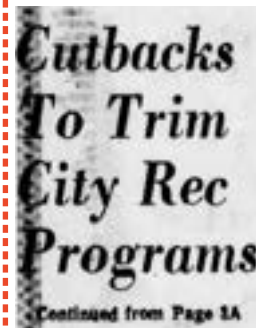


Military Use

National Guard Airfield operates at Plymouth and Burt Rds 1927-1930
106th Cavalry Stationed at Joy Road and Lahser Road 1927-1941
728th Battalion of the Miliary Police stationed in Rouge Park, Park Casino becomes Military Rec Center 1941-1945
Nike Missile Base Operates 1955-1963



Soap Box Derby ends -1967
Smith House program closes -1975
Joe Prance Day Camp ends -1976
Nature Center closes -1976



DECLINE 1967-2002

Winter sports project may be an uphill battle
City says lack of money means more delays

Nature Center, Smith House, and Historic Nursery Barn burn -1982
Sorensen Recreation Center burns -1984
Joe Prance Day Camp resumes 1989-2004
New sledding hill, ski hill and amphitheater construction begins -1990-1991 (never completed)
Many park amenities are abandoned, including ball fields, playgrounds, restrooms, and picnic tables - 1990-2010

Brennan Pools re-opened -2014
Stone Bridge Nature Trail opens -2016
New basketball courts completed -2018
Scout Hollow Campground Re-opens - 2018
New tennis courts, three new playgrounds, two new picnic shelters, 1/2 mile walking track and ball field built -2020



ROUGE PARK TODAY



18 HOLE
GOLF COURSE +
DRIVING RANGE

**2 MODEL
AIRPLANE
FIELDS**



**4.7 MILES OF THE
ROUGE RIVER**



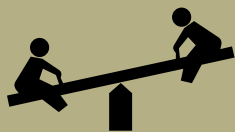
**CAMP
GROUND**

**ARCHERY
RANGE**



**HORSE
SHOES**

ONE BASEBALL DIAMOND



**6 PLAY
GROUNDS**

**2 TENNIS
COURTS**



**2 BASKETBALL
COURTS**



**2 BRENNAN
POOLS &
SPLASH PAD**



**5 PICNIC
SHELTERS**



FOUR RECREATION AREAS

ONE BANQUET HALL

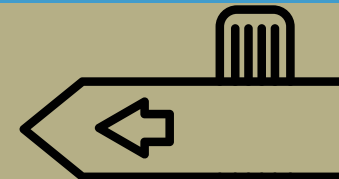
**1,184
ACRES**
DETROIT'S LARGEST PARK

9

**SOCCER
FIELDS**



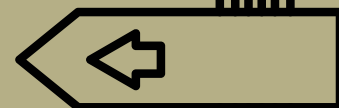
**3.5 MILES
OF NATURE TRAILS**



**3 MILES
OF MOUNTAIN
BIKE TRAILS**



**6.5 MILES
OF PAVED TRAILS**



PONY RIDES



DESTINATIONS

- 1 Rouge Park Golf Course & Driving Range
- 2 Brennan Pools & Recreation Area
- 3 Joe Prance Recreation Area & Nature Trail
- 4 Scout Hollow Campground
- 5 D-Town Farm
- 6 Greening of Detroit Tree Nursery
- 7 Native Prairie: Prairie Pathway & Butterfly Garden
- 8 Alex Jefferson Model Airplane Field
- 9 Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association Horse Barn
- 10 Winter Sports Area, Amphitheater, Archery Range and Strathmoor Control Line Airfield
- 11 Lahser Marsh
- 12 Cozy Corners Recreation Area
- 13 Sorensen Recreation Area: Sorensen Promenade & Interpretive Historical Trail
- 14 Motor City Mountain Bike Association Trail
- 15 Stone Bridge Nature Trail



PARK USER GROUPS



Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association



Detroit AeroModelers



Detroit Outdoors Camping



Elite Archery



Motor City Mountain Biking Association



Strathmoor Model Airplane Club

RECENT PROJECTS

Many ideas generated by this plan have already come to fruition. FORP worked with local, state and national partners to improve and add wayfinding and interpretive signage to three nature trails and to reforest 16.4 acres of the park. In partnership with the Detroit Pistons, Lear Corporation, and the Michigan Trust Fund and others, the City of Detroit initiated projects to build the Pistons basketball court, renovate the Brennan Pools and building, and build three new playgrounds, three new picnic shelters, soccer fields, a baseball diamond and a 2/3-mile paved walking loop.



Tree Plantings



Brennan Pools/Banquet Hall Renovation



Prairie Pathway + Butterfly Garden



Three Playgrounds & Picnic Shelters



Splash Pad



Baseball Diamond



Stone Bridge Nature Trail



Sorensen Paved Walking Loop

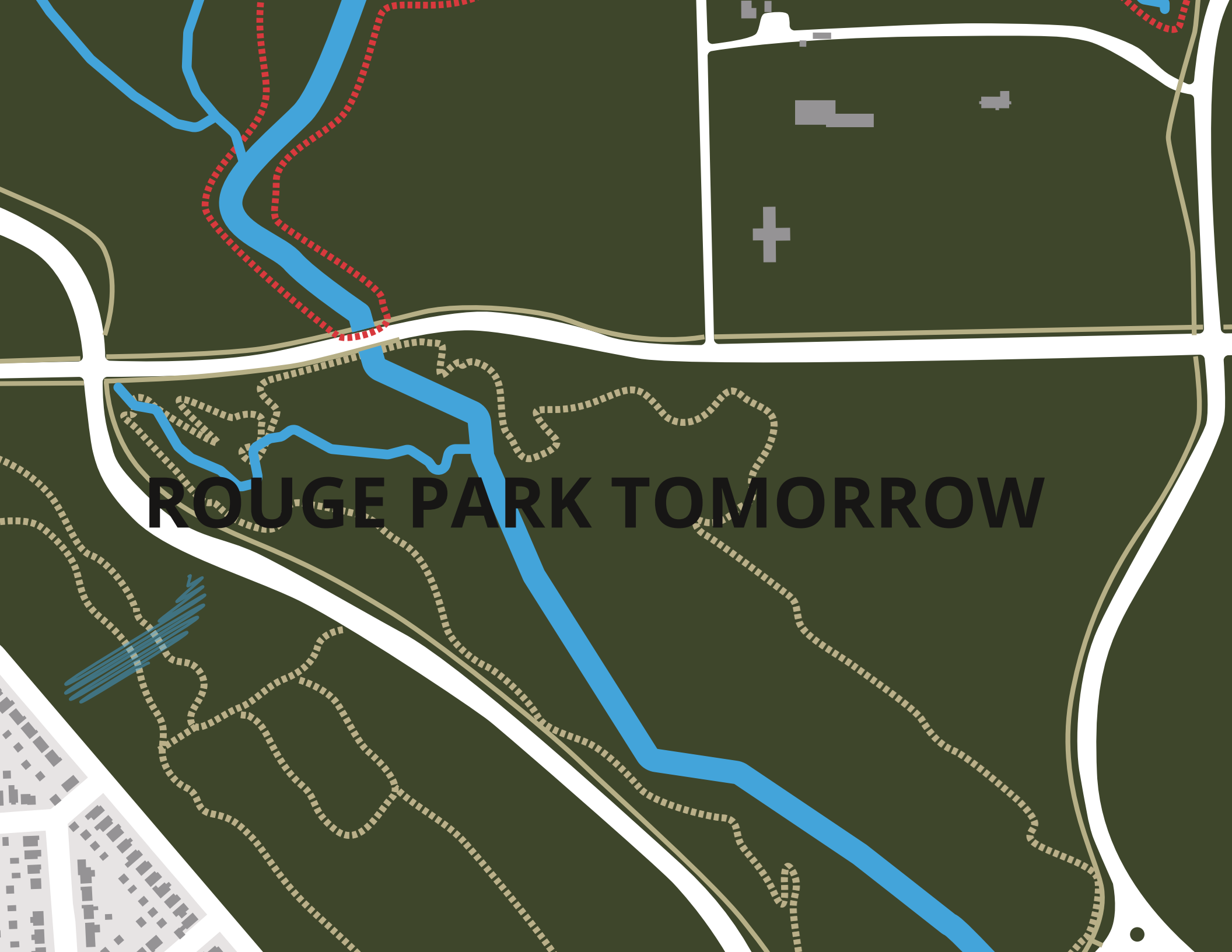


Sorenson Interpretive Histoical Trail



Piston's Basketball Courts

ROUGE PARK TOMORROW



NATURAL & DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The park is divided into development areas, natural areas and non-park use areas. Development of future park amenities are restricted to the development areas.

DEVELOPMENT AREAS:

- Golf Course
- Recreation Areas
- Alex Jefferson Model Airfield
- Growing Together Sculpture Area
- Future Nature Center

NATURAL AREAS:

The rest of the park is designated as a natural area with no development of park amenities other than what is necessary for access, use and interpretation of these areas.

The recreation areas will have basic park amenities such as playgrounds, picnic shelters, paved walking loops, bicycle rentals, comfort stations and ball fields. Picnic shelters will be rented with a refundable cleaning deposit.

In addition to these basic amenities, the Joy & Spinoza area will add larger regional amenities including fairgrounds, an amphitheater, an observation tower, a winter sports area, rock and ice climbing, and a dog park.

NON-PARK USE AREAS:

The Greening of Detroit Nursery and the D-Town Farm will revert to natural areas if vacated. The Detroit Police Pistol Range should be relocated outside of the park, and the building should be used as a Nature Center or other appropriate park amenity.

LEGEND:

- Development Areas
- Natural Areas
- Non-Park-Use Areas






REFORESTATION, RESTORATION & STEWARDSHIP

Six areas, totaling 16.4 acres, have been reforested. The plan is to reforest an additional 68 acres. The purpose of reforestation is two-fold:

1. As most of the existing forested area is in the floodplain, a restored upland forest will increase forest and habitat diversity in the park and provide the environmental benefit of storm water and carbon retention.
2. Reforestation along the perimeter of the park will create 360° natural vistas in the park interior helping to create the “*Rouge Park Experience*” of an oasis of Nature.

The 60 acre prairie area (bounded by Joy Rd., Outer Dr., Tireman, Parkland and West Parkway) has approximately 20 acres of forested and mowed road frontage, 8 acres of restored native grasses and wildflowers, and about 32 acres of land covered in invasive buckthorn, honeysuckle, hawthorn, porcelain berry, and non-native grasses in need of removal and restoration. Once reforestation and prairie restoration is complete. Ongoing maintenance and stewardship is critical to preserving these natural amenities.

LEGEND:

-  **Future Reforestation**
-  **Completed Reforestation**
-  **Existing Forest**



ROADSIDE TREES

Over the decades, Rouge Park has lost the majority of its original roadside trees to Dutch Elm disease and other causes. Shade trees along all the roadways, interior and perimeter, will be replaced. This will restore the attractive natural tree canopy over the roads.

INTERIOR:

There are 17 miles of interior roadside (including both sides of each road). 3.5 miles of this roadside is properly planted. 13.5 miles of roadway need replanting. Planted an average of 40 ft. apart along each roadway, this will require planting approximately 1,980 trees.



A rare tree-lined road in the park



Most roadsides lack trees

PERIMETER:

There are just over 6 miles of roadway forming the perimeter of the park. 3.5 miles are tree-lined and the remainder of the roadway needs trees planted, which will require approximately 360 trees.

 Roadways needing new trees



PARK MAINTENANCE

Basic maintenance is the foundation on which all future revitalization of Rouge Park depends. For at least the last 20 years, basic maintenance has been sporadic at best and in many categories, nonexistent. Basic maintenance of Rouge Park should include:

- Regular mowing (see Mowing).
- Weed trimming around trees, poles and boulders in conjunction with regular mowing.
- Trimming of brush overhanging all sidewalks, paved paths and the aggregate perimeter path once a year, and as needed (i.e. fallen trees).
- Pruning of trees in mowed areas once a year, and as needed (i.e. tree damage)
- Placement of garbage cans throughout recreation areas, all parking areas and all other park amenities. Year-round collection of trash from trash cans at least weekly during spring, summer and fall, and every 14 days in winter.
- Removing litter along roadsides, throughout recreation areas, all parking areas and all other park amenities and promptly clearing illegal dumping sites.
- Regular maintenance of comfort stations and portable toilets.
- Repainting playground equipment where needed at least once every five years.
- Snow plowing of all paved paths, sidewalks and parking areas after snow accumulation.
- Prompt repair or replacement of damaged sidewalks, paved paths, signage and equipment.

Finally, a robust anti-litter campaign is needed including signage throughout the park discouraging littering.



Mowing

There are three types of mowing that need to occur in the park:

1. **Manicured Cut** (at least once a week):

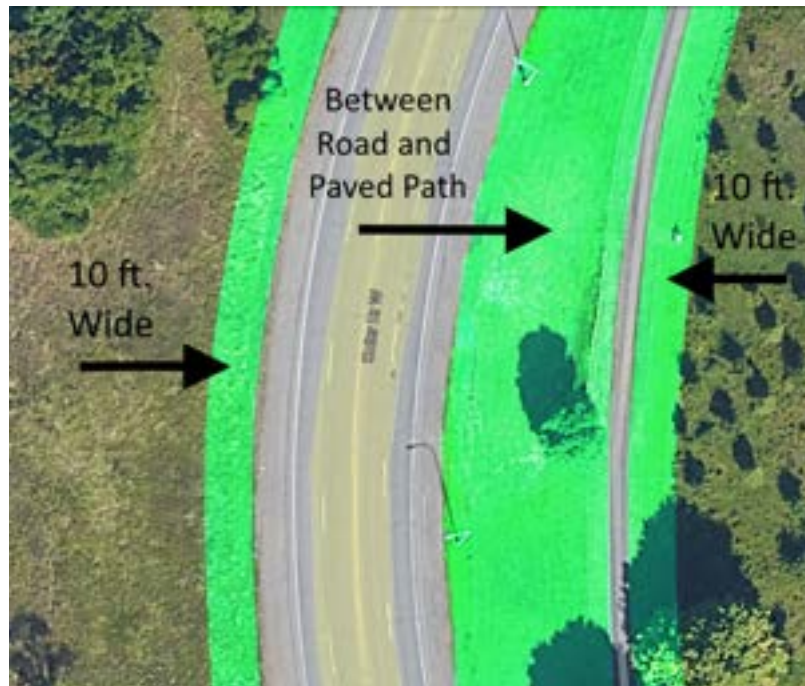
- A. Recreation areas with their picnic areas, ball fields, playgrounds, etc. Athletic fields should receive more regular mowing as needed to keep them in excellent condition.
- B. Both sides of all paved paths and perimeter paths

2. **Regular Cut** (every 7-10 days)

- A. Roadsides and other open areas outside of recreation areas
- B. The Prairie Pathway trail and Scout Hollow Campground

3. **Annual or Bi-annual Cut**

- A. Native prairie areas
- B. Open areas scheduled to be reforested in the future



NATURE TRAILS

Rouge Park currently has 3.5 miles of nature trails. The following additions will be made:

- 1** 3.3 miles will be added to the Scout Hollow Nature Trail making the total loop 4.0 miles with a connector trail to the Joe Prance Nature Trail.
- 2** A 0.5 mile section of the Mountain bike trail will be used to connect the Wildwood Trail loop with the Scout Hollow Loop.
- 3** 1.3 miles will be added to the Sorensen Trail, connecting it with the Stone Bridge Trail, to re-establish the historic Wildwood Trail developed here in the 1930s. The stone and plaque commemorating the life of Etta S. Wilson will be restored to its original placement at the Sorensen Trail head.
- 4** A new 1.0 mile nature trail will be added with a trail head at the Upland Forest Recreation Area after reforestation of this area is complete.

When all the trails are complete, there will be approximately 9 total miles of hiking trails.

LEGEND:

- ■ ■ ■ Scout Hollow Nature Trail
- ■ ■ ■ Joe Prance Nature Trail
- ■ ■ ■ The Prairie Pathway
- ■ ■ ■ Mountain Bike Trial
- ■ ■ ■ Stone Bridge Nature Trail
- ■ ■ ■ Sorensen Promenade & Nature Trail
- Equestrian Trail
- ■ ■ ■ Proposed Trail Extensions



ROUGE PARK GREENWAY & Connected Paved Paths

There are 6.9 miles of paved paths including loops of 3.3, 2.1, 1.0 and 0.6 miles, the majority of which are in poor condition and have not been repaved or maintained in 40 years. Most need to be repaved, and some areas need to be raised or re-routed out of regularly flooded areas. They also need to receive regular maintenance including trimming overhanging branches, mowing and reappear.

There are 2.8 miles of sidewalk located on the north and south sides of Plymouth and Joy Rd. and the north side of Warren Ave. However, the sidewalks on the north side of Plymouth and south side of Joy are not continuous. 0.23 miles of additional sidewalk are needed on the north side of Plymouth and 0.60 miles of sidewalk (or paved path) are needed on the south side of Joy Rd. to complete the routes.

Completion, and proper maintenance of the Joy Rd. sidewalks, will create a new 1.6 mile loop south of Joy Rd. and a new 2.8 mile loop north of Joy. Combined together, this will create a new 4.4 mile route with not a single street crossing.

Future connected paved paths at Warren Ave. on the south and Plymouth Rd. on the north will connect the Rouge Park Greenway to a future Detroit greenway system.

- Existing Paved paths** ———
- Existing Sidewalks** ———
- Rouge Park Greenway Connections** ———
- Proposed New Sidewalks and Paved Paths** ———



PERIMETER PATHS

A simple perimeter path made of crushed limestone will follow the circumference of the park between Plymouth and Warren Ave. The path would provide immediate access to a walk in the park from along six miles of park border.

A well manicured walking path with benches and garbage cans every ¼ mile , and interspersed flower gardens will create an attractive face to the park. 25 benches and garbage cans will be needed.

Proposed Perimeter Path 
Existing Perimeter Sidewalks/Paved Paths 



TRAFFIC

As described in the history section, the 1920s conflict between the plans for building the 37 mile Outer Drive system and the plans for Rouge Park resulted in a hybrid of the two. The failure to keep the two projects separate has resulted in a park that often feels more like it was designed for automobiles to pass through, rather than for people to recreate.

AUTOMOBILE ENTRANCES

This failure can be corrected and Rouge Park can become the destination park it was originally envisioned to be with a few very modest changes in the existing roads. There will be four automobile entrances, located at the north, south, east and west ends of the park.




The current entrance on Plymouth Rd. represents an ideal design; a short lane to a parking area with access to the interior park roads beyond. This design will be replicated at the south end of the park at Warren and Outer Drive. Park users entering from the east and west on Joy Rd. should have a similarly designed entrance at Spinoza Dr.

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCES

Converting the other eight entrances (many only a block or two apart) into bicycle/pedestrian entrances will greatly reduce traffic and littering, enhance safety and improve the quality of the park experience. This will also reduce the number of temporary closure gates necessary for closing the park to traffic for special events (i.e. 5K races) and for the proposed “Weekends in the Park” program, allowing pedestrians, bicycles, roller bladders and skate boarders to enjoy of all the interior park roads free from automobiles.

Finally, as new amenities, programming and improved maintenance greatly increases the popularity of the park, the speed limit will need to be restored to 15mph on Spinoza Drive for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

LEGEND:

-  Automobile Entrances
-  Pedestrian/Bicycle Entrances
-  Entrance Parking Lots



PARKING

The designated parking plan for RougePark is modeled after the successful plan implemented in nearby Hines Park in the 1990's. Before implementation, Hines Park had a similar "park anywhere" design and was plagued by litter, illicit activity and dumping. By developing attractive parking areas that highlight park amenities with information signage, benches and garbage cans, and prohibiting parking in the long stretches of roadway between amenities (where dumping, littering and illicit activities thrive), Rouge Park will enjoy the same dramatic improvement in the beauty, safety and function of the park that Hines Park did after its plan was implemented.

Larger parking lots will be located at the major automobile entrances to the park on Plymouth Rd., Warren Ave. and Joy Rd. Smaller perpendicular parking areas should be located at the Sorensen Recreation Area, Upland Forest Recreation Area, Nature Trailheads Area (Outer Drive and Tireman Rd.), the Butterfly Garden and Growing Together Sculpture area. Parallel Parking along roads in the recreation areas will also be allowed.

PROPOSED PARKING AREAS:



Major Parking Areas



Smaller Perpendicular Parking Areas



Parallel Parking Allowed

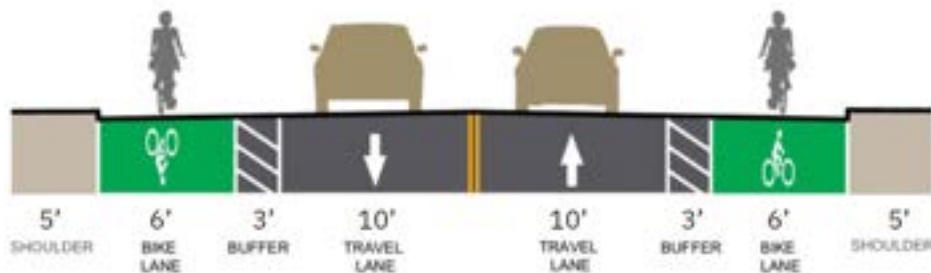


BIKE LANES

Bike lanes have been recently completed on Spinoza Drive. Bike lanes will be added next to both sides of Outer Drive, Rouge Park Drive, Plymouth, Joy Rd., Warren Ave. and Tireman. This will reduce Outer Drive and Rouge Park Drive from four lanes to two 10 ft. lanes. This will allow for 6 ft. wide bicycle lanes with 3 ft. safety buffers and a 5 ft. shoulder.

LEGEND:

- Existing Bike Lanes
- Proposed Bike Lanes



WAYFINDING

A wayfinding system will be developed for the park that clearly informs visitors of all the amenities in the park and directs them effectively between any and all locations.

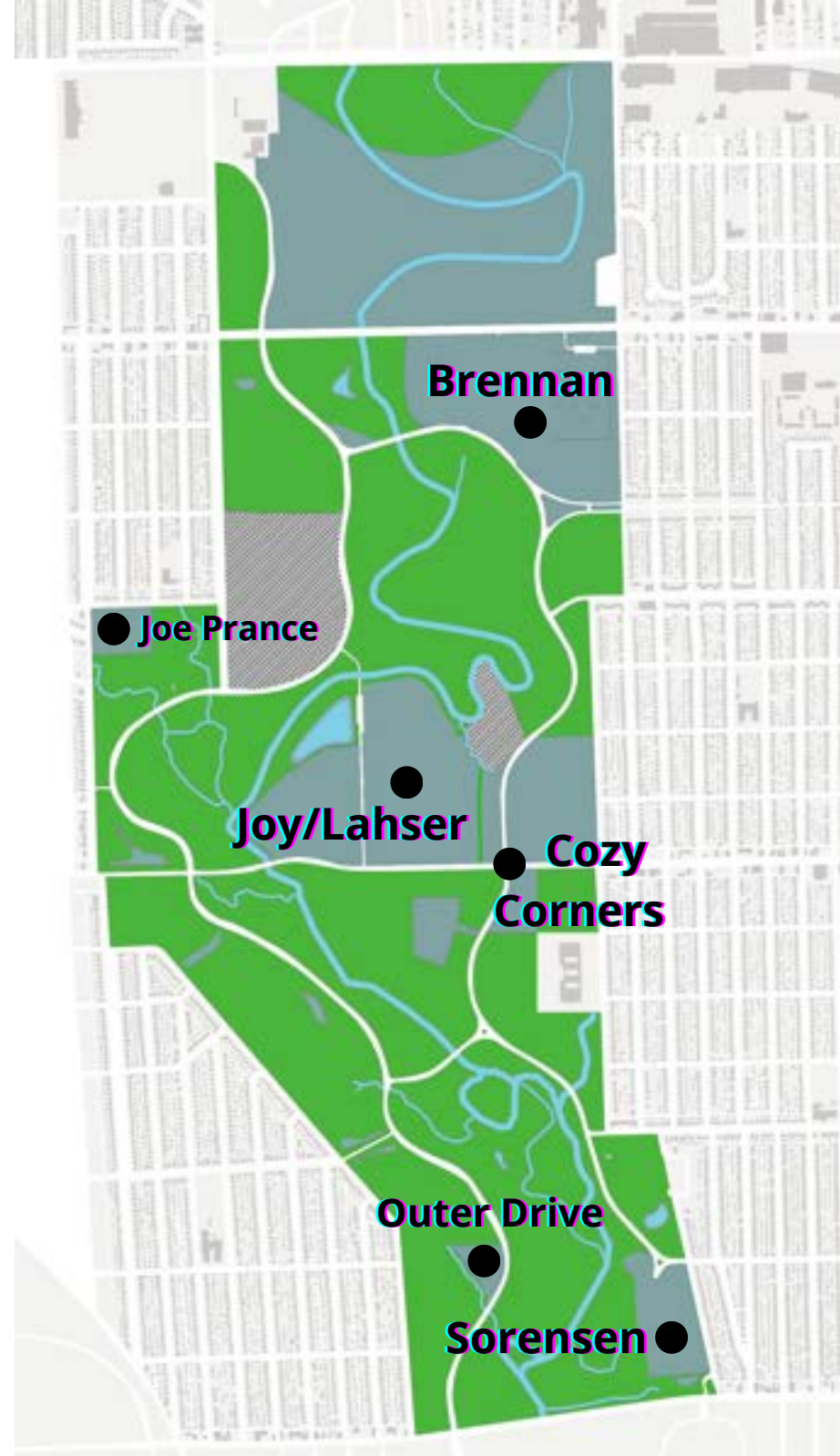
Information kiosks at each parking area will display a large map of the park, and be well stocked with brochures with a detailed map.

The signage will be designed in a style unique to Rouge Park with a consistent theme focused on Nature and with elements of the stonework as found at the Stone Bridge and the Sorensen Promenade. This Wood, River & Stone theme will be used in all promotional materials and rebranding of the park.



RECREATION AREAS

Rouge Park's six recreation areas will all have information kiosks, bathrooms, benches, bike racks, trash cans and dog waste stations, picnic shelter rentals will require a cleaning deposit, returned after an inspection. Bike rentals should be conveniently located close to bus stops.



BRENNAN RECREATION AREA

The Brennan Pools Recreation Area is the most developed area of the park with two swimming pools, a splash pad, banquet hall, comfort station, basketball, tennis and horseshoe courts, a soccer/football field, a paved walking loop, two playgrounds and three picnic shelters.

The proposed amenities to be added include:

- A 60 ft. x 40 ft. community picnic shelter for large events
- Completion of the Banquet Hall with a catering kitchen, soundproofing and small stage area for presentations, wedding, etc.
- Large gazebo on the site of the former diving pool for weddings, live music, events, etc.
- A skate park and/or pump track (or in the Joy/Spinoza area)
- Benches and garbage cans every ¼ mile along the walking loop,
- Spectator seating at the courts and ballfield
- Bicycle rentals
- Sports equipment rental for basketball, pickleball, tennis and horseshoes.

Programming at the pool will include swim lessons and scheduled times for free swim, adult lap swim, senior lap swim, water aerobics, teen swim parties, etc. The pool and banquet hall will be rented for weddings, concerts and other events. Sports leagues will be organized for the courts and ball fields.



Brennan Pools



Banquet Hall



Piston's Basketball Court



Splash Pad



Tennis Courts



Picnic Shelters



Playgrounds



Pump Track



Poolside Event Gazebo



Proposed Amenities



Skate Park (Chandler Park's shown)

JOE PRANCE RECREATION AREA

Joe Prance was a founding member of the Kiwanis Club who started a day camp here in 1947 that operated for 44 years and included camping at Scout Hollow. The Rouge Park Nature Center operated here from 1957 until 1976. The area was renovated in 2006 with support from the Michigan Trust Fund for an Intown Youth Camp, but was never programmed. It has a large play structure, small picnic shelter, several stand-alone picnic






tables, a comfort station and a 1/3 mile nature trail with two small outdoor classrooms. Re-institution of a Summer Day Camp is proposed for this area and a short nature trail to connect to the Scout Hollow nature trail will be built.





LOCATION:



EXISTING:

-  Playground
-  Picnic Area
-  Picnic Shelter
-  Comfort Station
-  Hiking Trail

PROPOSED:

-  Summer Day Camp
-  Hiking Trail Connector



COZY CORNERS RECREATION AREA

Currently Cozy Corners has two playgrounds and several picnic tables. The proposed additional amenities include entrance signs, information kiosks and comfort stations (both north and south of Joy Rd.), three large 60 ft. x 40 ft. picnic shelters, a splash pad, several small picnic shelters and stand alone picnic tables, a 2/3 mile paved walking loop with benches, and garbage cans every 1/4 mile and bicycle rentals.









In addition, the large wet area at the north end will be converted to a small man-made lake, forested on the east, west and north sides, with a 60 ft. x 40 ft. picnic shelter at the shoreline. The large open area in the northeast corner will be used as a festival and fairgrounds for large events. A parking lot will be constructed over Spinoza Dr. creating a park entrance style similar to the Plymouth Rd, entrance.

A new city recreation center will be built on Trinity St., south of Joy rd.

EXISTING:

-  Playground
-  Picnic Tables

PROPOSED:

-  Festival & Fair Grounds
-  Splash Pad
-  Comfort Station
-  Lake
-  60' x 40' Picnic Shelters
-  Recreation Center
-  Playground
-  Picnic Tables

LOCATION:



JOY & LAHSER RECREATION AREA

Currently in this area there is the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association barn and horse yards, an archery range, a control-line model airfield, the city maintenance building and four unused park buildings.

In the 1990's, construction was started on a 100 ft. ski hill west of Lahser with views of downtown Detroit and another large hill on the site of the former toboggan slides as part of a project to rebuild the winter sports area and create a 10 acre amphitheater. These two projects were never completed.

The proposed new amenities include:

- The completion of the existing amphitheater with the construction of a bandshell
- Development of a winter sports area including snow-making capability, a tow rope for tubing, an ice skating rink, and a comfort station building with skate and tube rentals
- 100 ft. observation tower on the unfinished ski hill
- Dog park
- Skate park (or at Brennan)
- Pump track (or at Brennan)
- Disc golf course
- Rock/ice climbing wall
- Picnic shelter
- Picnic tables

The parking lots along the service road will be enlarged and landscaped, and the Lahser Bridge will be rebuilt as a narrow pedestrian-only bridge. The older small buildings will be renovated for storage, office and activity space. Finally, a new name will be proposed for this recreation area.



LOCATION:



EXISTING:

- Sledding Hill
- Archery
- Horse Stables
- Model Airplane Field
- Dog Park
- Skate Park
- Rock/Ice Climbing
- Disc Golf
- Marsh Viewing Deck

PROPOSED:

- Amphitheater
- Ice Rink
- Observation Tower
- Comfort Station
- Picnic Shelter
- Picnic Tables

SORENSEN RECREATION AREA

The Sorensen Recreation Area is the site of the park's original Recreation Center that burned in 1984. Recently, the playground and one ballfield was rebuilt, and a soccer field, small picnic shelter, paved walking path and an historical interpretive trail was added.

The proposed new amenities include:

- A stone-themed 60 ft. x 40 ft. community picnic shelter (with historical plaque) on the foundation of the original recreation center overlooking the river
- A comfort station
- A basketball court
- Additional picnic tables

As part of the restoration of the historic Wildwood Nature Trail developed here in the 1930's, the original historic plaque at the trailhead should be replaced and the stone steps, the stone promenade, the bridge over the river should be restored.

In addition, the scenic wetland south of the estate should be restored and a historical plaque placed for the 18th century Spanish cannon. Finally, the abandoned comfort station and basketball court just north of the recreation area should be removed.

LOCATION:

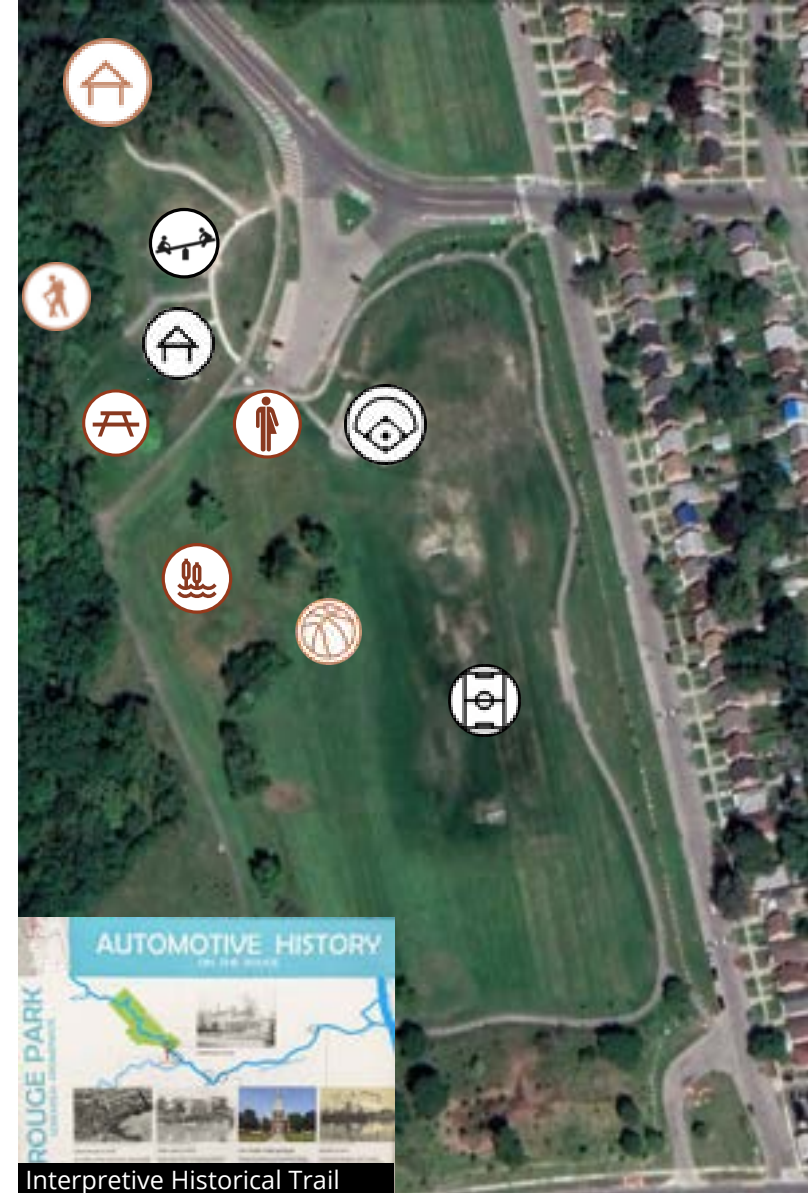


EXISTING:

-  Picnic Shelter
-  Playground
-  Baseball Field
-  Soccer Field

PROPOSED:

-  Large Picnic Shelter
-  Comfort Station
-  Basketball Court
-  Scenic Wetland
-  Wildwood Trailhead
-  Picnic Tables



Interpretive Historical Trail



18th Century Canon



Sorensen Promenade

OUTER DRIVE RECREATION AREA

This proposed new recreation area will be developed across Outer Drive from the proposed Nature Center and also serve as the trailhead for the Upland Forest Nature Trail. It will have the following amenities:

- 60 ft. x 40 ft. picnic shelter
- Playground
- Comfort station
- Picnic tables

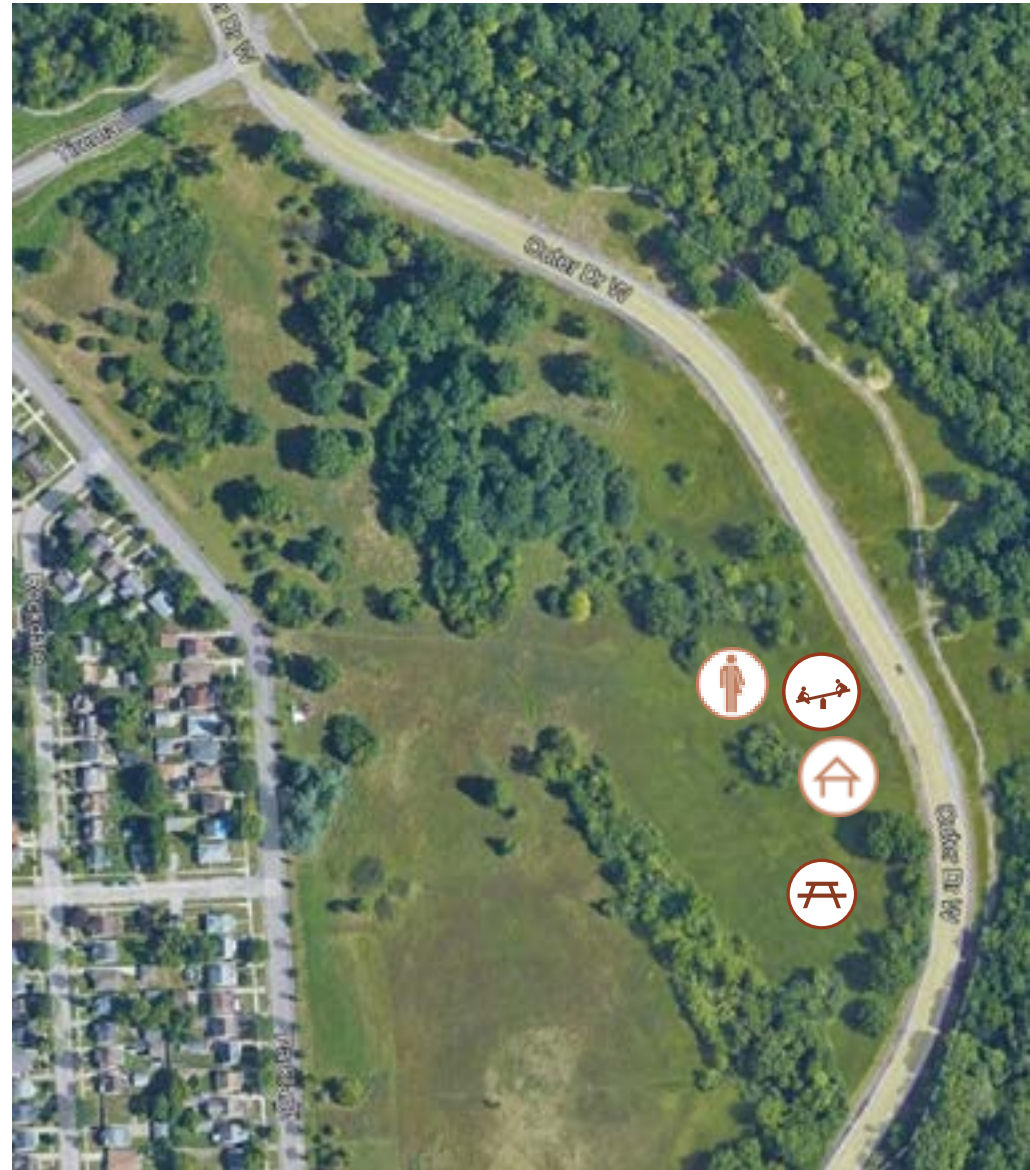
It will also have a perpendicular parking area, an information kiosk and trailhead signage for the Upland Forest Nature Trail.

LOCATION:



PROPOSED:

-  Picnic Shelter
-  Picnic Tables
-  Playground
-  Comfort Station



OTHER AMENITIES & USES

The Rouge Park Golf Course, The Alex Jefferson Model Airfield, the D-Town Farms and the Meyer's Nursery are currently managed by GolfDetroit.org, the Detroit AeroModelers, the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and the Greening of Detroit respectively. This master plan does not address these areas other than to propose that, if their current uses cease, these areas will be restored to natural forests and/or prairies.



NATURE INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Two locations are considered for a Nature Center: the east side of Outer Drive, south of the Stone Bridge Nature Trail; and the building currently housing the Detroit Police Pistol Range. The Outer Drive location is near the former comfort station and pony barns and should therefore have access to water lines and electric lines. It is near the trailheads for the Prairie pathway and the Stone Bridge and would be located on the bluff overlooking the wetland on the Stone Bridge trail. The Detroit Police Pistol Range location is ideal since it would not require a new building and is located along the Scout Hollow Nature Trail overlooking the river and not far from the Lahser Marsh and many other amenities in the Joy & Spinoza area.

The Nature Center will interpret the many different habitats for plants and animals found in Rouge Park including its upland forests, prairies, floodplain, river, riparian corridor, wetlands and marsh. It will be designed primarily for the environmental education of school aged children, but will be appropriate for all ages.

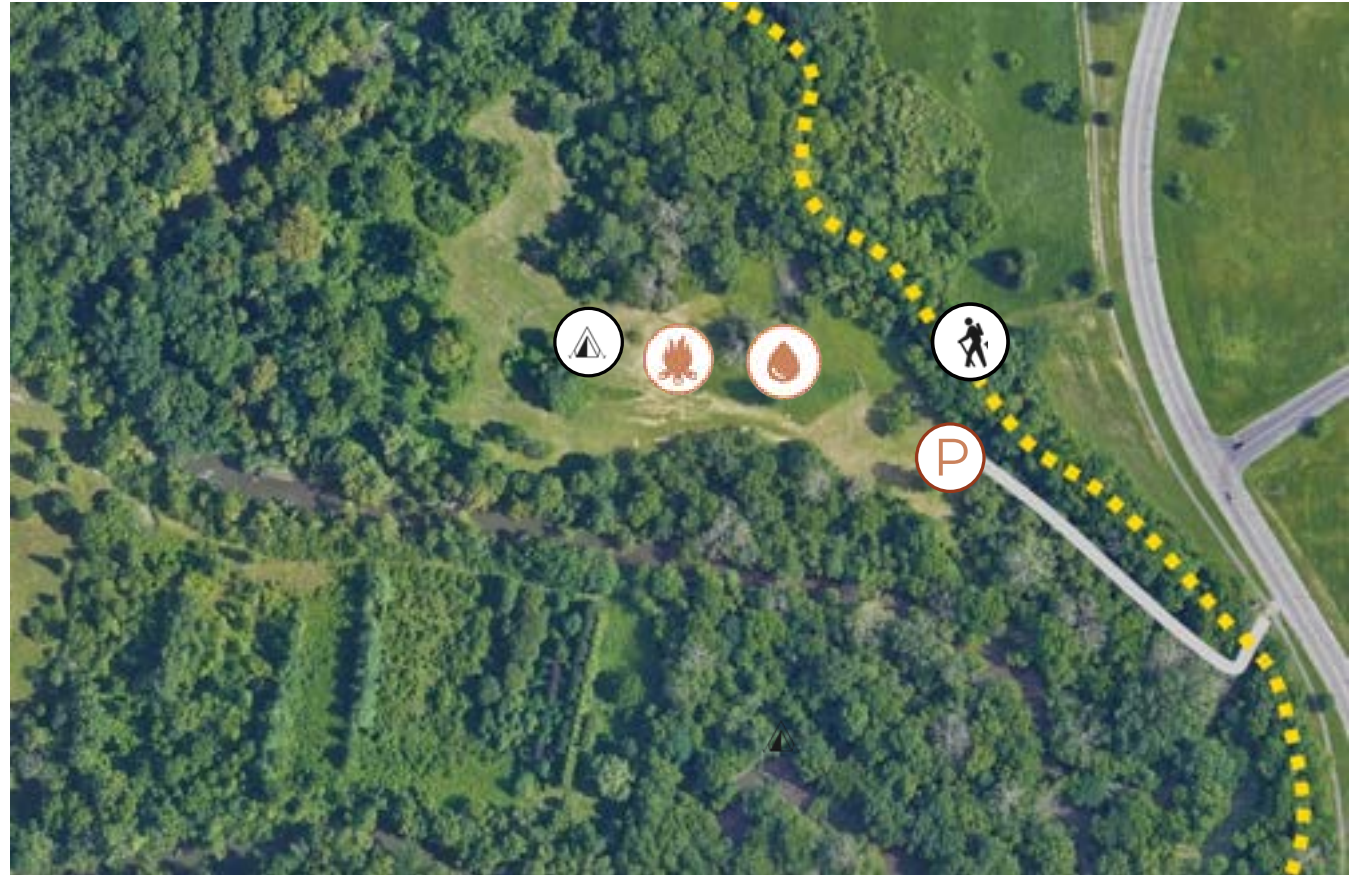
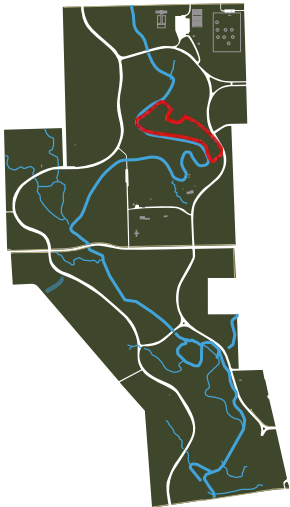


★ Possible Locations for a Nature Interpretive Center





SCOUT HOLLOW CAMPGROUND

Used heavily by Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls and other youth groups from the 1930s to the 1970s, usage declined over time and ceased by 2010. In 2018, Detroit Outdoors, a partnership between the Sierra Club, the YMCA and the City of Detroit, re-opened the campground for youth groups. It currently has a portable toilet and a few picnic tables. Proposed improvements include restoring the water line, a permanent fire circle, and adding a parking area.




LOCATION:



EXISTING:

-  Youth Group Campground
-  Portable Toilet
-  Picnic Tables
-  Hiking Trail

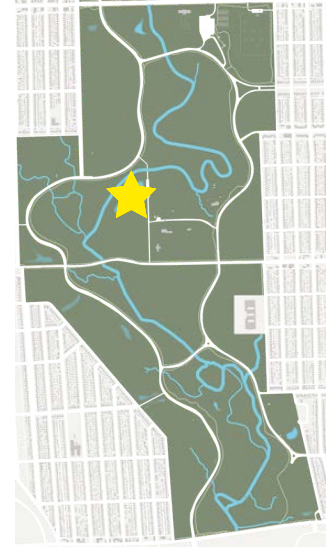
PROPOSED:

-  Water Line
-  (Restored) Fire Circle
-  Parking Area

LAHSER MARSH

The Lahser Marsh is a 5 acre wetland popular with birdwatchers and known its abundant wildlife. Proposed new amenities here include:

- A 30 ft. x 10 ft. wildlife viewing platform
- Interpretive signage for common species of waterfowl, fish, amphibians, etc.
- An attractive split rail fence to replace the current cyclone fence



GROWING TOGETHER SCULPTURE GARDEN

When the automobile entrances to the park are reconfigured to four entrances (north, south, east and west), the section of Rouge Park Dr. from Plymouth Rd. to Spinoza Dr. will be renamed and terminate at a parking lot at the sculpture. Bicycle and pedestrian paths will remain. The proposed new amenities here include a small picnic shelter and a few benches and picnic tables.






GREENWAY CONNECTIONS

On the north end of the park, a paved path connector will be added along Rouge Park Drive north of Plymouth, then continuing north on Outer Drive through Outer Drive/Fullerton Park, connecting through Eliza Howell Park and the Greenway beyond, as it is developed.

On the south end of the park, a paved path and/or protected bike lanes will be added along Outer Drive from Warren to Parkland. Bike lanes will continue on Outer Drive to Hines Drive, and a paved path will continue south on Parkland St., connecting to Parkland Recreation Area in Hines Park, with a safe crossing to the existing paved path on Hines Drive.

It is proposed to investigate the possibility of including the 60 acre Outer Drive/Fullerton Park (immediately north of Rouge Park) to Rouge Park to help protect and manage it. This park currently has no amenities and should remain natural forest except for the addition of the greenway connection to Eliza Howell Park. Adding other adjacent properties that become vacant, such as the land where the apartment buildings on Tireman and Pierson were razed) should be considered as well.

- Rouge Park Greenway** 
- Proposed City of Detroit Greenway Extensions** 
- Hines Park Greenway** 



Weekends in the Park

Rouge Park will offer a program similar to Hines Park's hugely successful Saturdays in the Park with park roads closed to traffic to allow walkers, joggers, bicyclists, roller bladders to enjoy the roads without the fear, noise and annoyance of traffic. The four automobile entrances will remain open for parking, but the roadways will be closed with swing gates; two at the Brennan Parking lot, two at the Cozy Corners entrance and one at the Warren entrance. The program will run annually from May 1 to November 1.



100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The summer of 2025 will be the 100th anniversary of the opening of Rouge Park. It is the goal to have most of the elements of this master plan completed, or at least in progress.

100th anniversary celebrations should be intensely promoted by the city, inviting residents and visitors alike to discover the many wonderful natural and recreational amenities in Rouge Park.

This would be an ideal time for a re-branding of the park as Detroit's premiere park, Detroit's Natural Playground, as fundamental to Detroit's identity as Central Park is to New York's. It is also an ideal time to renew a commitment to make maintenance, programming and promotion a top priority for the next 100 years.

Finally, since our beloved River Rouge Park is named after the "Rouge River" and not the city of "River Rouge", this would be an opportune time to formally rename the park "Rouge River Nature Park" (still "Rouge Park" for short) so as to end the confusion with River Rouge.

