

January 12, 2021



EAST RIVERFRONT

ASSETS STUDY

Engagement Summary

Round 3: November, 2021

Part of the

**PARKS & REC
STRATEGIC PLAN**



Format

Due to the pandemic, meetings were held virtually on Zoom. Short presentations were followed by group discussion. Presentation materials along with recordings of the meetings can be found on our website [here](#).

There were **three meetings**, each covering different Riverfront Assets:

1. **November 15th, 2021:** Erma Henderson + Riverside Marinas
2. **November 16th, 2021:** Spirit Plaza, the Fist + Hart Plaza
3. **November 17th, 2021:** Erma Henderson Park + Owen Park

Community Update!

PARKS & REC
STRATEGIC PLAN
CITY OF DETROIT

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
EAST RIVERFRONT ASSETS STUDY**

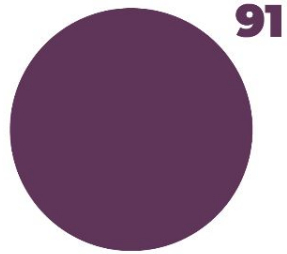
3 MEETINGS!

Each **virtual meeting** will cover different assets:

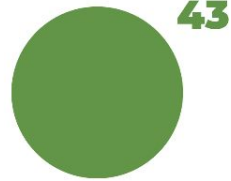
- Mon. November 15, 6-7:30pm:** Erma Henderson + Riverside Marinas
- Tues. November 16, 6-7:30pm:** Spirit Plaza, the Fist + Hart Plaza
- Wed. November 17, 6-7:30pm:** Erma Henderson Park + Owen Park

Participation

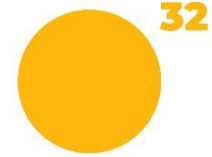
In all, about 160 stakeholders joined across all meetings.



**Erma Henderson Marina,
Riverside Marina &
St. Jean Boat Launch**



**Civic Center
(Hart Plaza, Spirit
Plaza, the Fist)**



**Owen Park &
Erma Henderson Park**

Meeting 1: The Marinas

ERMA HENDERSON MARINA , RIVERSIDE MARINA & ST. JEAN BOAT LAUNCH

WHO ATTENDED: Boat owners, non-boaters and marina management.

WHEN: November 15, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m

This meeting was very well attended with almost 100 participants. Many boaters voiced their concerns over who has participated in the process so far, and how they could have their voices heard in the final recommendations.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- The marinas are well loved. They are an important part of black boating culture.
- Support for current black-run management, would like to provide him with the resources to succeed.
- Display Erma Henderson's legacy on site.
- Concerned about having not been involved in the process to date, many questions about the survey and how it was administered.
- Have concerns about security and admitting non-boaters including waterfront/dock safety, keeping them away from boat slips.

ACTION:

- The planning team re-opened the survey to be sure those who wanted to participate were able to. It was sent to all those who signed in, along with Marina management to distribute to their listserv.

We would love more funding at Riverside to make our marina more competitive and beautiful like other marinas. We have so much potential. We are such a huge family here.

- MEETING PARTICIPANT

The Marinas

Questions in the chat:

1. What will the status of management be?

Answer: This plan has no recommendations considering the management of the facility, it is a capital improvement assessment.

2. Who was surveyed...how was it distributed?

Answer: The survey was distributed widely, citywide, through the DONs, marina management, and advertised through signage throughout the Riverfront. Survey details can be viewed [here](#).

3. How can we participate in the survey?

Based on tonight's feedback, the survey for the marinas was reopened, and can be taken [here](#).

4. Are the marina's owned by the city? County?

The marinas are owned by the City of Detroit.

What we heard:

Reopening the Marina will be amazing, having access to the water space is exciting. But as a resident in the area, the noise after 10pm can be disturbing, will noise enforcements be enforced?

Information about Erma Henderson - who she was and why the marina was named after her. This is part of the culture and heartache of the community.

I encourage the plan to thoughtfully integrate St. Jean's Ramp into the plans with Riverside. Today these two facilities function so separately that most public customers do not know that this public land is connected. I'm supportive of the suggested plans and improvements being recommended, which will greatly improve our boater experiences.

Transient slips are nice idea for Henderson, also agree with caller that additional food/beverage opportunities on the river beyond Sinbads and Coriander would be a welcome addition.

I Love the plans of improvements to include family and parks , however, what's being done must be handled with care of the city I'm sure you have grants in place to ensure every year that you are good for the season.

There should be full transparency around this process and there needs to be focus on equity and inclusion. Priority should also be given to the existing management company.

Meeting 2: The Civic Center

THE CIVIC CENTER

WHO ATTENDED: Detroiters and regional Hart Plaza/Civic Center fans and residents with deep connections to the Gateway to Freedom statue.

WHEN: November 16th, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m

Love the Woodward promenade and the Grand Staircase. The comfort station is a must - and most cities don't ever have enough of them.

- MEETING PARTICIPANT

This meeting was very well attended with almost xx participants. There was general support for the improvements being proposed, though much debate on whether or not to relocate the Gateway to Freedom Underground Railroad memorial statue.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- Deep consideration needs to be taken in the decision to relocate the Underground Railroad memorial to the top of the proposed grand stair. While some saw the value in moving it to a more prominent and accessible location, others voiced concern that it would damage the hidden experience and intent of the artist. A suggestion was made to contact the artist, Ed Dwight, to see if he would support this move.
- Priorities for improvement were continuing to maintain the statue. (Recently stakeholders worked with the city to ensure ongoing maintenance of the statue.)
- Need to appreciate the history behind this statue, i.e., the descendants of those who were part of the Underground Railroad raised the funds for creating it and are still very active in seeing to its well-being.
- It was indicated that there was money set aside for the future care of the statue; stakeholders wondered what had become of that money.
- Participants were generally supportive of the Woodward promenade and the site plan approach. Celebrating historic legacy and more public art were topics of interest.

Civic Center

Questions in the chat:

1. Has full funding been secured?

Answer: Full funding has not yet been secured, this plan will help to determine costs and do fundraising.

2. Will there be any development/retail added to the site?

Answer: There are concessions planned on the lower level.

3. Are there plans for the rest of the former Ford Auditorium site?

Answer: There are no set plans for that site currently, though development options are being considered.

4. Who was involved in the process of making these recommendations?

Answer: A local architecture firm, ROSSETTI, was hired to spearhead the process for the City of Detroit. These recommendations are the synthesis of a year long public process. Their team, along with the City, are presenting these draft recommendations for public comment.

What we heard:

“ Maintenance funds are necessary so we are not here in 20 more years.

“ Clean restrooms, functioning fountain, basic maintenance of sculptures. . . just start there. The City has such a lack of funds and resources, why are these things a priority?

“ Readily available deep shade is essential at all points. Along the Woodward promenade, a cool breezy walk down to the water on a hot day feels delicious.

“ The Gateway to Freedom was strategically and thoughtfully placed by the Sculptor, Ed Dwight. For that reason, it should remain in its present place.

“ Moving our Landmark Gateway is NOT like moving furniture, it was placed on a specific spot.

“ Detailed, historically-based, and vibrant art installations would be great for daily activation and attention. Especially when there are no events.

Meeting 3: Erma Henderson + Owen Park

OWEN PARK & ERMA HENDERSON PARK AND MARINA

WHO ATTENDED: Area residents who are active and passive users of Erma Henderson Park; kayak users, etc.

WHEN: November 17th, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m

This meeting was attended by about 30 participants. There was general support for the improvements being proposed, though there was strong support for the park remaining a passive space for fishing rather than a more activated park.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- At Owen Park
 - Fishing amenities need to be prioritized and celebrated.
 - Restrooms and picnics tables were the most desired amenities.
 - Suggestions for fishing educational programming for kids.
 - Too much space is allocated in the proposal for kayaks, consider making that smaller to preserve the passive nature of the park.
- At Erma Henderson Park
 - General support for the proposed site plan, including the relocation of the parking lot and a water activity rental area.
 - Open the bathrooms!
 - Need to continue conversations about security concerns at the site, and update near neighbors when future construction is taking place.

Erma Henderson Park

What we heard:

“

I was disappointed that park users were not notified of the upgrades [this past summer] via signage. We found ourselves driving or walking to the park to find it locked or new gates. We felt disrespected that we were not updated on the changes via the park since we were there until the park was abruptly closed.

“

We launch closer to the picnic shelters out of convenience due to the collapsed sea wall but could easily move to Erma Henderson to protect space for fisherman.

“

Fishing education and amenities for our kids.

Next Steps

ROUND 3: ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

- A Survey targeting boaters and will remain open through the end of the year:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ERASMarinas>
- Follow up with sculptor who created the Underground Railroad Memorial on Hart Plaza.
- Residents from The Whittier (residential tower) have requested a meeting with the team.