

# EAST RIVERFRONT ASSET STUDY



*PART OF THE:*

**PARKS & RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN**

**STUDY PERIOD: 2020 - 2022**

# EAST RIVERFRONT ASSET STUDY

## PREPARED FOR

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO

the residents and stakeholders who contributed their time and provided their expertise to this study and throughout the process by attending meetings, focus groups, interviews, and taking surveys.

## CONSULTING PARTNERS

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**ABOUT THE STUDY**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every five years the City of Detroit undergoes a process to update its Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan (PRSP). In 2021, the Parks & Recreation Division launched a citywide community engagement campaign including surveys, focus groups, and meetings across the city. As part of the overall effort to analyze the park system (the PRSP), the City of Detroit conducted an in-depth analysis of unique city-owned sites along the city's East Riverfront (the East Riverfront Asset Study-ERAS) to understand how Detroiters use these riverfront sites now and how they envision them in the future. The goal of the ERAS was to understand the condition of the sites and develop a collective vision and actionable plan for creating vibrant, sustainable destinations.

As part of the planning process for these important riverfront sites, the City of Detroit and the planning team hosted a series of public engagements which served as a forum for residents, park users, and community leaders to review the opportunities and challenges of the sites and collectively propose ideas and recommendations to improve them in the future. Throughout the project there were three rounds of public engagement at different stages of the planning process. In total, approximately 810 community participants provided input to this study.

The planning team performed an extensive analysis of the structural, civil, electrical, mechanical, and operational components current sites and participants in community meetings and surveys provided valuable feedback about the site's existing conditions from a users' perspective, all which informed the concept designs and overall recommendations.

Design concepts were coordinated between various City departments to ensure alignment with future strategies and priorities. Preliminary cost estimates were developed around two categories: capital projects and capital improvements and repairs that were identified in the conditions assessment phase. The concept for each asset combined with community input and estimated costs, informed the preliminary phasing.

While future planning, community engagement and inter-departmental coordination will be required to deliver specific implementation projects, – The City of Detroit can utilize this comprehensive study and recommendations to assist in capital planning with the goal of providing quality public spaces on the Riverfront to Detroiters.

4.9 General Observation Tables

SEAWALL AND SHORELINE – GENERAL OBSERVATIONS				
<b>1 – ARETHA FRANKLIN</b>				
ITEM	GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	ACTION	CONDITION	SAFETY OR INTEGRITY CONCERNS
Rip Rap Shore Line	See Shoreline Restoration Report (December 2019). Construction of new shoreline completed Summer 2021.	None	Good	No
<b>2 – OWEN PARK</b>				
ITEM	GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	ACTION	CONDITION	SAFETY OR INTEGRITY CONCERNS
Concrete Seawall	Observed deterioration of wall sections above current water level. Significant erosion behind wall. Evaluation of wall height needed as current water levels meet wall elevation.	Replacement of Shoreline Protection	Poor	Yes
Steel Sheet Pile Wall and Cap	Steel Sheet Pile walls found to be in generally good condition.	None	Good	No
Tie Backs	No broken tie backs observed	None	Good	No
<b>3 – STOCKTON PARK</b>				
ITEM	GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	ACTION	CONDITION	SAFETY OR INTEGRITY CONCERNS
Natural Shoreline	No current shoreline protection in place. Significant erosion was noted. Placement of uniform concrete for protection creating potential safety concerns.	Installation of New Shoreline Protection	Poor	Yes
<b>4 – HART PLAZA</b>				
ITEM	GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	ACTION	CONDITION	SAFETY OR INTEGRITY CONCERNS
Steel Sheet Pile Wall	Surveyed using drone technology. Limited observations made due to high water conditions. One minor observation noted from above walkway.	Further Investigation	Good/Fair	No
Canilevered Concrete Walk	Areas of deterioration along outer edge of concrete section. One spalled area at joint creating hole to water.	Repairs and Maintenance	Good/Fair	Yes
Timber Fender System	Noted damage and missing timber sections in need of repairs.	Repairs and Maintenance	Fair	No
Galvanized Ladders	A number of ladders damaged or missing.	Repairs and Maintenance	Fair	No

As a result of Hart Plaza's current operating structure, including its mission and vision statement, booking/rental rate structure, event activity and shared costs of many services, there is not a separate profit and loss statement for Hart Plaza. As such, this section provides a high-level summary of financial operations based on available information provided by the City.

As shown in the following chart, annual contracted rental revenue increased each of the profiled years and ranged from approximately \$131,600 in 2016 to \$172,700 in 2019. Most of the events that take place at Hart Plaza pay less than \$4,000 in contracted rental revenue. Festivals such as Movement and the Detroit Jazz Festival typically generate a large percentage of the total contracted rental revenue at Hart Plaza.



From an expense perspective, Hart Plaza is a cost center under GSD. As such, staffing and event-related costs are not tracked separately and certain operating costs such as utilities are allocations.

Line Item	2017	2018	2019
Insurance	\$168,700	\$44,800	\$207,200
Utilities	\$95,000	\$255,600	\$4,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$263,700</b>	<b>\$310,200</b>	<b>\$211,900</b>

Capital Improvement Planning

Ongoing preventive maintenance and capital upkeep of public assets are imperative for their long-term marketability and financial efficiency. Each year, Hart Plaza management submits its capital requests which is incorporated into the master Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the GSD. Hart Plaza's list gets prioritized along with all other CIP projects in the City. As such, desired capital improvements for Hart Plaza do not always make the final CIP list for submission to City Council.

An excerpt from Condition Assessment & Seawall Shoreline Investigation Report

An excerpt from Hart Plaza Management and Operations Analysis Report

High level, pragmatic concepts were developed to align with both required infrastructure improvements and public input, as well as capitalizing on opportunities and needs in the larger network of the collection of public assets on the Riverfront. These design concepts were used to estimate future capital improvement projects that will require additional planning design and engineering.



Proposed program & circulation diagrams for four assets

## East Riverfront Assets Study

The East Riverfront Assets Study is a year-long project that will look closely at the network of city-owned parks and programs along the Detroit Riverfront. It aims to:

- Learn how Detroiters use these sites now and how they envision them in the future
- Develop a collective vision and actionable plan for creating vibrant, sustainable destinations along the riverfront

For more information about the plan, visit [www.detroitmi.gov/eras](http://www.detroitmi.gov/eras)

For alternative ways to complete this survey, visit [www.detroitmi.gov/eras](http://www.detroitmi.gov/eras)

Share your experiences of the Detroit Riverfront

1. Your zip code: \_\_\_\_\_ Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Your contact information (phone or email): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please tell us about your interactions on the Detroit's East Riverfront (select one answer for each question per site below)

Site Name	A. How often do you go?			B. Who do you go with?			C. How do you get there?		
	Never	Once	Often	Alone	With Friends	With Family	By Car	By Bike	By Foot
Detroit Riverwalk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hart Plaza	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Joe Louis Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hart Plaza	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Owen Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Erma Henderson Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Erma Henderson Marina	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
St Jean Baptiste Lighthouse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hart Plaza & Commons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valerie Park / Zavierre Bluffs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joe Louis Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gabriel Richard Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

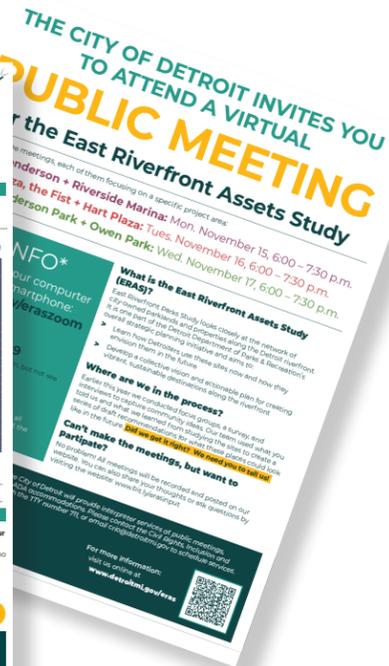
3. What amenities and/or activities are missing on the Detroit Riverfront?

4. What is your age? 5. Which of the following best describes your race? 6. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

- 16 or younger
  - 17-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65-74
  - 75 or older
- American Indian
  - Asian
  - Black/African American
  - White or Caucasian
  - Asian - Indian
  - Asian - Bangladeshi
  - Asian - Chinese
- Asian - Filipino
  - Asian - Korean
  - Asian - Vietnamese
  - Asian - Other
  - Native Hawaiian
  - Pacific Islander
  - Other
- Non-Hispanic
  - Dominican
  - Cuban
  - Mexican/Chicano/a
  - Puerto Rican
  - Other Hispanic or Latino
  - Prefer not to say

SEE BACK FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

With advance notice of seven calendar days, the City of Detroit will provide interpretive services at public meetings, including American Sign Language (ASL) and Braille. For more information, visit [www.detroitmi.gov/eras](http://www.detroitmi.gov/eras)



Round 2 - Community Survey (left) Round 3 - Public Meeting Flyer (Right)

# EAST RIVERFRONT ASSET STUDY

## PURPOSE & GOALS OF THE PROJECT

### PARKS & RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Every five years the City of Detroit undergoes a process to update its Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan (PRSP). In 2021, the Parks & Recreation Division launched a citywide community engagement campaign including surveys, focus groups, and meetings across the city. The information gathered during this engagement process was analyzed and used to produce the 2022-2032 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

### EAST RIVERFRONT ASSET STUDY

As part of the overall effort to analyze the park system (the PRSP), the City of Detroit selected the Detroit based firm ROSSETTI through a competitive bidding process to conduct an in-depth analysis and provide recommendations of unique city-owned sites along the city's East Riverfront aimed to learn how Detroiters use these riverfront sites now and how they envision them in the future, and develop a collective vision and actionable plan for creating vibrant, sustainable destinations along the riverfront.

The goals of this study are to:

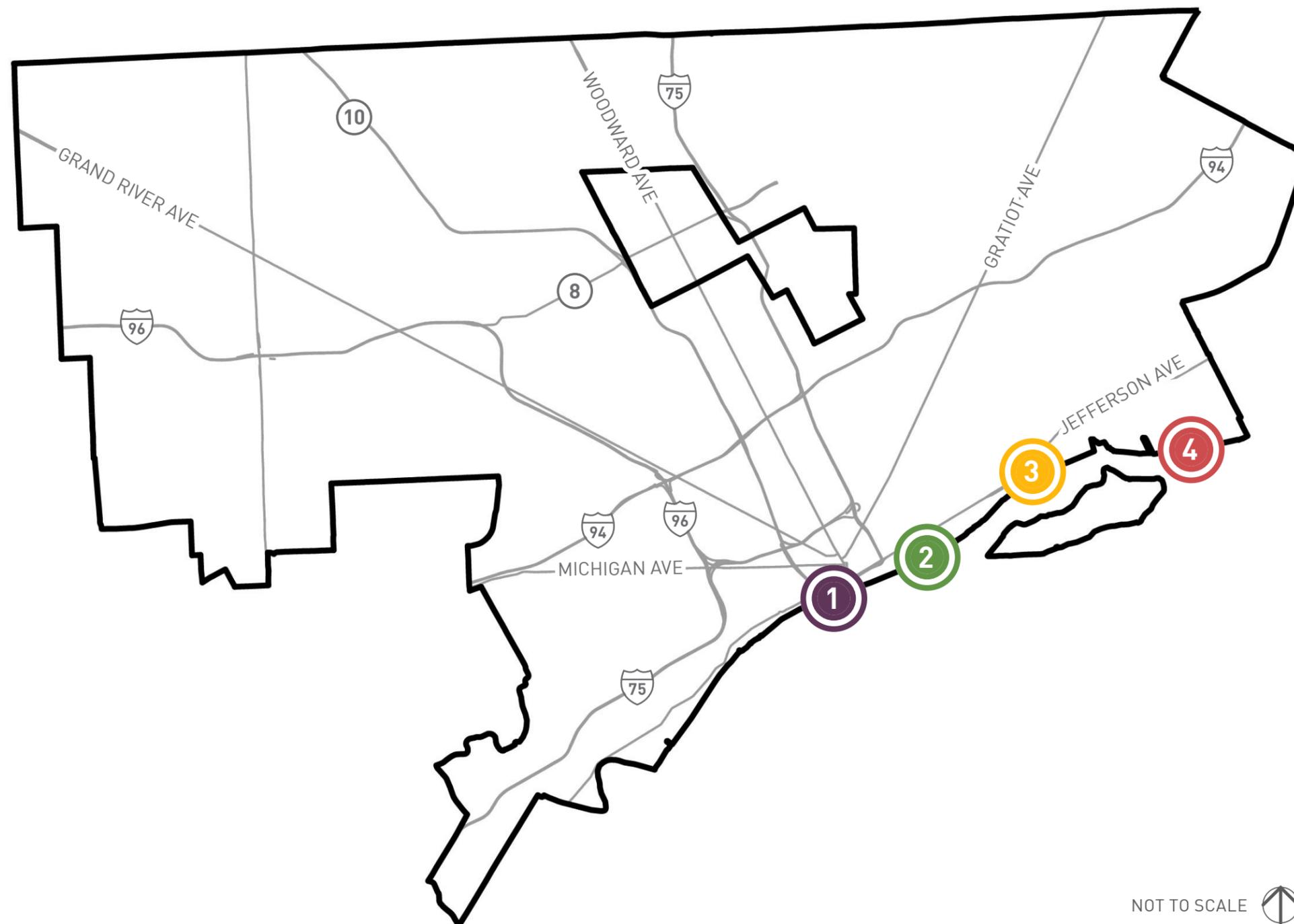
1. Assess current infrastructure conditions and prioritize critical improvements,
2. Develop strategies and conceptual designs for redevelopment, and
3. Establish a strategy for operations and phased capital investment.

The four areas included in the study are:

1. **Civic Center**  
(Hart Plaza, Spirit Plaza and The monument to Joe Loius)
2. **The Aretha**
3. **Gold Coast**  
(Owen Park, Erma Henderson Park, Erma Henderson Marina, and Stockton Park)
4. **Marina District**  
(Riverside Marina, St. Jean Boat Launch, Engel Memorial Park, and Reid Memorial Park)

Opportunities for further analysis that are not covered in this study include:

- Shoreline habitat restoration and typologies
- Blueways and connections to the Great Lakes



# PROJECT TIMELINE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

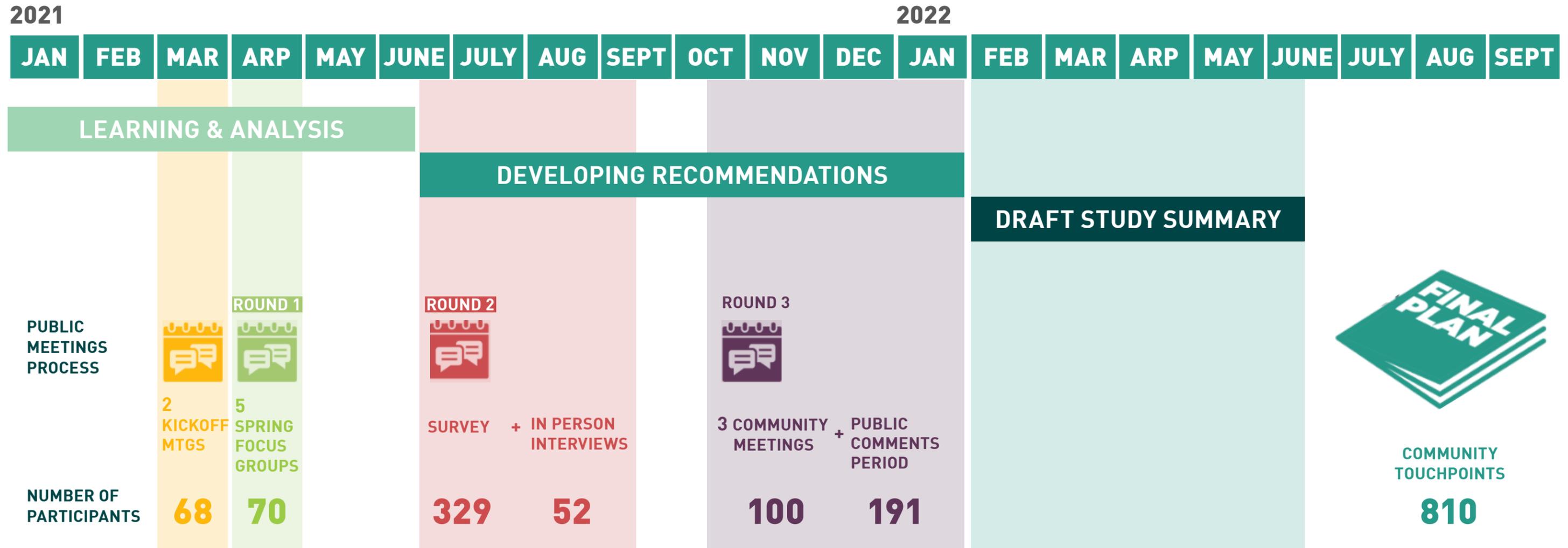
To incorporate an inclusive planning process for these important riverfront sites, the City of Detroit and the planning team hosted a series of public engagement events that allowed residents, park users, and community leaders to review the opportunities and challenges of the sites and collectively propose ideas and recommendations to improve them in the future.

Throughout the project there were three rounds of public engagement at different stages of the planning process.

Round 1, which took place in the spring of 2021, included two kickoff meetings and five focus group meetings; Round 2, in the summer

of 2021, included surveys and in-person interviews; and Round 3, in the fall of 2021, included three community meetings to review recommendations and gather feedback. In total, approximately 810 community participants provided input to this plan throughout the planning process.

In total, 68 participants joined round 1 kickoff meetings and 70 participants joined focus group meeting; 329 community participants shared their inputs in the community survey in round 2, and 52 stakeholders were interviewed in person by the team; 100 participants attended community meetings and 191 participants provided input to the marina survey during round 3. See project Appendix C for more information on public engagement and survey results.



# DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

- COMMUNITY MEETINGS
- FOCUS GROUPS
- STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS
- COMMUNITY SURVEY
- EVENT PRODUCERS STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

## 2. TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

- CONDITION ASSESSMENT AND SEAWALL SHORELINE INVESTIGATION
- URBAN DESIGN AND CIRCULATION AND PROGRAMMING ANALYSIS
- HART PLAZA MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS REVIEW
- HART PLAZA HISTORY REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- HART PLAZA EVENTS RECOMMENDATIONS
- BEST PRACTICES FOR THE ARETHA MANAGEMENT
- RIVERSIDE MARINA CONDITION ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- ERMA HENDERSON MARINA CONDITION ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- ST. JEAN BOAT LAUNCH CONDITION ASSESSMENT

## 3. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD (HDAB)
- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (PDD)
- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (PDD) - HISTORIC
- DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)
- BUILDINGS, SAFETY ENGINEERING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENT (BSEED)
- GREAT LAKES WATER AUTHORITY (GLWA)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this study will serve as a guide when each of the sites is considered for future improvements. In general, recommendations and design concepts will be further develop through additional community engagement and City departments coordination.

# SITES IN CONTEXT

In recent years there have been renewed efforts undertaken to transform the Detroit Riverfront into a dynamic accessible public space. The first phase of this transformation began in 2003 with the development of the first three and a half miles of the Riverwalk between the former Joe Louis Arena and Gabriel Richard Park. Since that time, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy (The Conservancy) has worked to make Detroit’s riverfront vibrant and accessible from the Ambassador Bridge to the MacArthur (Belle Isle) Bridge.

While The Conservancy continues to play a leading role in the revitalization of Detroit’s riverfront, the organization has partnered with a number of other entities to develop the assets and public

spaces that now comprise the East Riverfront. This includes: the recent improvements to Milliken State Park and Harbor by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR); planning efforts by the City’s Planning and Development Department; the completion of the East Riverfront Framework Plan in 2018 by the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation; and major ongoing investments by the General Services Department in Hart Plaza, the Aretha Franklin Amphitheater (formerly Chene Park) and Erma Henderson Park and Marina.

### Assets and Planning Context

City of Detroit-owned assets along the East Riverfront make up approximately 180 acres, of which 30 acres are managed and operated by partner organizations. These assets play a key role

in the character and development of the riverfront and were considered within the context of adjacent sites.

The four East Riverfront sites at the focus of this study are part of a larger network of riverfront parks along the Detroit River. Each park within the network offers Detroiters a distinct experience.

Types of parks assets along the East Riverfront include:

- East Riverfront Asset Study sites (part of this study)
- City-owned parkland
- State-operated parkland
- Parks managed and operated by the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy



- EAST RIVERFRONT ASSET STUDY SITES**
- 1 CIVIC CENTER (Hart Plaza, Spirit Plaza, Monument to Joe Louis)
  - 2 THE ARETHA\*
  - 3 GOLD COAST (Owen Park, Erma Henderson Park & Marina, Stockton Park)
  - 4 MARINA DISTRICT (Riverside Marina, St. Jean Boat Launch)
- CITY-OWNED PARKLAND**
- 5 MAHERAS PARK
  - 6 ALFRED BRUSH FORD PARK
  - 7 MARINER PARK
- STATE-OPERATED PARKLAND**
- 8 MILLIKEN STATE PARK AND HARBOR\*
  - 9 BELLE ISLE PARK
- PARKS MANAGED AND OPERATED BY THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT CONSERVANCY**
- 10 RALPH C. WILSON, JR. CENTENNIAL PARK\* (Under Construction)
  - 11 GM PLAZA
  - 12 DETROIT RIVERWALK
  - 13 ROBERT C. VALADE PARK\*
  - 14 MT. ELLIOTT PARK\*
  - 15 GABRIEL RICHARD PARK\*
- \*Note: On-site public restrooms available.

NOT TO SCALE