

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: July 20, 2023 Time: 9:00 a.m. Location: Virtual

Meeting began at 9:00 a.m. No quorum was established

Roll Call

Present for BIPAC Attending remotely: Michele Hodges; Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan Michael Curis; Detroit, Michigan

Excused
Bud Denker

Unexcused Lonnie Peek Sommer Woods

DNR Staff Present
Ron Olson, Chief
Tom Bissett
Karis Floyd
Amanda Treadwell
Lt. Todd Szyska
Marie Kaphengst
Barbrea Young
Erika Compton
Barbara Graves

Others Present Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy Chair Hodges opened the meeting with a welcome and advised that they cannot officially start the meeting, but they can continue with business of the day as required by the Open Meetings Act as part of roll call.

General Updates

Park Update – Karis Floyd, Park Manager

Karis said The Youth Connection mentoring program will host 30 groups who will perform various projects around the island this year. The groups come from Flint, Pontiac, and Detroit. They hired two new rangers who start July 24 and are in the process of hiring a GOA, one full-time and one seasonal janitor position and have reposted the park supervisor position. The sports complex has started their leagues. Karis gave an update on the Scott Fountain which will be down for a period of time due to the flooding that caused damage to electrical circuits. He also gave an update on the change in traffic patterns as well as saying the picnic shelters have been rented out through Labor Day, expressing that the park is busy even with the Flynn and casino closures.

Infrastructure Update – Amanda Treadwell, Urban Area Field Planner

Amanda discussed the update on the casino roof repairs that include replacement due to the extensive damage as well as a focus to repair the whole casino. The Dossin Museum had their open house on July 8 and had over 100 guests in attendance. She also discussed the new traffic changes at the park and the purpose for making these changes as well as the benefits of the new parking areas. (Update attached.) Chair Hodges thanked everyone who came to the museum open house.

Parks and Recreation Update - Ron Olson, Chief

Chief Olson said that the FY2024 budget included an initial recommendation of \$43 million that ended up being \$23 million after conference committee. The budget has yet to be signed by the governor. The money is coming from additional ARPA funds, which \$12 million of those funds have already been allocated to Belle Isle's casino and conservatory. In that budget, it is stipulated that \$10 million would be earmarked to ensure that the HVAC air handling systems between the aquarium and Conservatory would be addressed, including drainage work so the aquarium basement does not flood and replacing the heating system from damage caused from previous floods. They are figuring out where the remaining money will be spent, focusing on the major infrastructure challenges with the Scott Fountain, the derelict buildings at the old zoo, the boathouse, beach renovations and bathrooms. They met with the Conservancy to talk about what potential

there may be for a leveraging, philanthropic match with the funding. The \$450,000 loss from the Grand Prix was also supplemented.

Chair Hodges said that the pursuit of AZA accreditation at the aquarium will be an empowering step forward in terms of care for the animals and the opportunities available as they partner with other accredited institutions around the country, allowing more eligibility for dollars through various grant sources and other philanthropy that will only come with the accreditation.

Member Curis asked what caused the booth revenue increase that Amanda mentioned and where was the money used. Chief Olson said previously there were challenges with hiring but with the recent increase in wages it has helped bring in more staff to help run the booths which in turn has made a difference in bringing revenues back up. Those funds go into the Park Improvement fund, a restricted fund that can only be used for parks and used to fuel the operational system. The Belle Isle budget is the only general funded park in the state park system at \$2.5 million plus about \$1 million in capital outlay. They are now subsidizing the Belle Isle budget with about \$1.5 million out of the Park Improvement fund. There is more support coming from the system than there is from the Recreation Passport.

Member Curis said if this additional revenue is being passed up because of the lack of staff, then they need to hire more people. Chief Olson replied that it was not because they passed up hiring additional staff, but because they had a hard time hiring staff. No positions were reduced. They usually hire 1,300 summer workers statewide, but for instance, in 2021, they were only able to fill about 850 – 900 positions (that same year had a record number of visitors). Hiring levels are better this year, and certainly better than 2021, but the challenge with hiring is not just at Belle Isle, but statewide.

Member Curis asked if there is a deadline for spending the ARPA funds and if they are not spent, are they lost. Chief Olson said the deadline is 2024 to obligate the funds and they have to be spent by 2026, or they are lost.

Law Update – Lt. Todd Szyska

Lt. Szyska said the park has been busy this summer. Still are experiencing speeding issues. The speed limit is posted at 25 mph to keep visitors safe, but they have captured people going over 45 mph. They are trying to enforce it jointly with MSP. PRD has posted electronic monitoring and information signs at the park to help increase awareness of the speed limit. He thanked everyone who participated in the Detroit Metro Youth Day and Ed Deeb, and said that it was a great event, and more children participated.

Belle Isle Conservancy Updates - Ayo Thomas, Belle Isle Conservancy

Ayo Thomas shared a presentation that included the various facility hours throughout the island. Ayo extended their congratulations to the Detroit Boat Club crew for their Women's Youth championship win at the U.S. Rowing Youth National Championships in Florida. Other updates included the Oudolf Garden boardwalk construction and the Nature at Night Series. More information can be found at belleisleconservancy.org. Presentation update is attached.

Public Comment

Meredith (Guest) – Thanked Ayo for the nice update about the Oudolf Garden and that they appreciate the BIC and MDNR support. Their website for more information: www.oudolfgardendetroit.org and on social media @oudolfgardendetroit.

Robin Heller – Is thankful for the meeting and continuing to conduct it online. She said that, sadly, the Annual Garden Party on Belle Isle will not be held in September much to her dismay and to those of the 600 people who usually attend, but the construction of the Belle Isle Conservatory is critical and important, and so to bear with them that they will be back in 2024.

Patrick Livingston (submitted written comment) - I am hoping that the Mobility Study will place priority on the deconstruction and repurposing of the former Gran Prix paddock area. With its 10 acres of concrete, the paddock is wasted space and an eyesore to visitors as they enter the park. The sight of Detroit Police Tactical Units practicing mob control drills on the site is not conducive to the promise of recreation that the park was designed to provide. In the past I have suggested a study be conducted to identify alternate uses for the site. I am writing now to further suggest that the first step in that process should be removal of the concrete paddock and restoration of the site to an open meadow. Once we are able to see the island as it was intended to be seen, we may once again be able to more fully recreate the Belle Isle experience.

Chair Hodges said she will follow-up with him.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

Next regular meeting: August 17, 2023 6:00 p.m.



Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Updates

July 20, 2023

Belle Isle Casino Roof Replacement

Progress Status - Building:

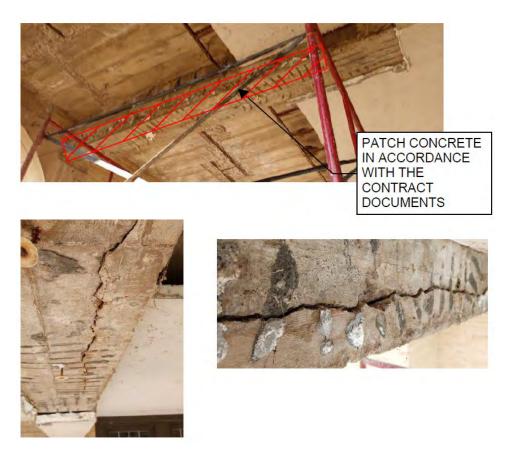
- Masonry and structural work under additional review in NW tower
- Additional Structural review identified for in boiler room floor.
- Demolition of skylight has begun.
- Reinforcing roof rafters have been installed to stabilize west end of roof.



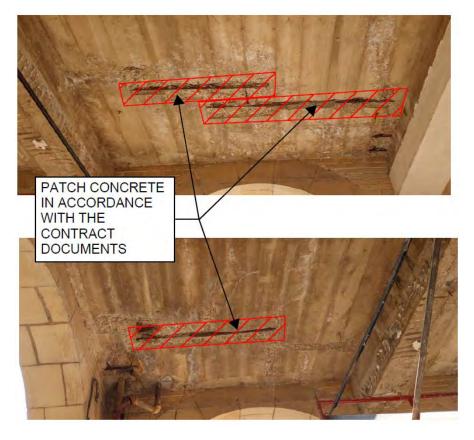


North side of NW tower.

Belle Isle Casino Roof Replacement



Concrete beam on south side of Casino



Ceiling of loggia under boiler room on south side of Casino

Belle Isle Casino Roof Replacement

Progress Status - Utility:

- Additional mechanical assessment required in boiler room.
- All drains have been scoped, collapsed drain lines have been identified.
- Two drains require repairs
- This week wiring for new condenser unit to be installed



Additional investigation required to assess structural elements at NW tower.

Open House

- Over 100 guests
- City and community wide advertising for meeting including in English/Arabic & Spanish -
- Press Release
- eBlast to stakeholders & public email list
- DONS June meeting
- Detroit News
- CBS
- WDET NPR



Summary of stakeholder and public survey

Collecting Feedback through Monday July 24, 2023

- Please see Belle Isle Mobility website Belle Isle Park Multimodal Mobility Study (michigan.gov)
- Video link Belle Isle Multimodal Mobility Study
 Round 2 Stakeholder Engagement Meeting |
 June 6, 2023 YouTube
- Phone number to leave comments: 313-261-5059
- Email to leave commentstreadwella@michigan.gov

To help ease traffic congestion and increase public safety at <u>Belle Isle Park</u>, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Belle Isle Conservancy, has launched a comprehensive multimodal transportation and traffic study, expected to be completed by the end of 2023. Wade Trim, a metro Detroit-based engineering consultant firm, will complete the study.

The purpose of the study is to increase safety and enjoyment, improve wayfinding and ease travel for all users and modes. The goal is to develop a phased strategy for implementing sustainable improvements to better manage all modes of travel, circulation and parking on the island.



Proposed solutions

As part of the study, a team of engineers, planners and landscape architects have been looking at both short- and long-term sustainable options to improving the park's circulation, wayfinding and parking. They have developed several proposed recommendations, including:

- Converting the main road around the island to two-way and adding traffic circles for easier and safer access
- Creating a welcoming bridge and entry experience, including installing protected bike lanes on the MacArthur Bridge and improving access at the toll booths.
- · Creating a promenade down the center of Central Avenue for all pedestrians, including walkers and bikers.
- · Adding parking where it's needed.
- . Improving signage around the island to help visitors know where to go and how to get there.
- Offering alternative mobility options, such as a ferry or improved public transportation, to and from the park.

Weigh in on a series of recommendations to improve Belle Isle mobility

At a recent July 8 open house, more than 100 people came together to review the proposed solutions and provide feedback

If you missed the in-person public open house, there are still opportunities to weigh in on a series of recommendations to make travel to and around the island easier and safer. The public is invited to watch a recorded presentation and provide feedback through Monday, July 24.

Watch recorded presentation detailing recommendations x

Feedback can be made via email at TreadwellA@Michigan.gov or by phone at 313-261-5059. Comments will be accepted through Monday, July 24.

Belle Isle Park Multimodal Mobility Study (michigan.gov)

WHY ARE WE HERE?

We need your feedback on our ideas to better manage ALL modes of travel and circulation on Belle Isle.



Create a welcoming bridge and entry experience



Two-way roads for easier & safer access



Create a Central Avenue for all



Put parking where you need it



Install clear wayfinding signage



Support alternative modes of transportation



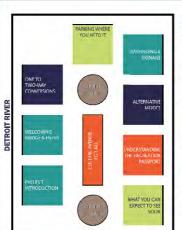
Improve understanding of Recreation Passport





Summary of stakeholder and public survey

HOW TODAY WORKS



EACH STATION INCLUDES

- Summary of what the project team has heard and learned about each topic
- Ideas for planned improvements
- Comment cards for feedback
- Project representatives to answer questions and talk



Don't forget your ticket for a free ice cream when you leave - Ice cream truck is outside!



A WELCOMING BRIDGE & ENTRY EXPERIENCE

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

- Bridge backups and closures are the number one issue for law enforcement, vendors and visitors alike
- The toll booth location and function are creating backups on the bridge
- Pedestrians and bikes feel uncomfortable crossing the bridge

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Prevent island closures due to traffic backups through toll booth relocation and improvements such as signage, additional vehicle lanes and increased staffing at the toll booth
- Comfortable, protected crossing for pedestrians and bikes eliminating required road crossings

A WELCOMING BRIDGE & ENTRY EXPERIENCE



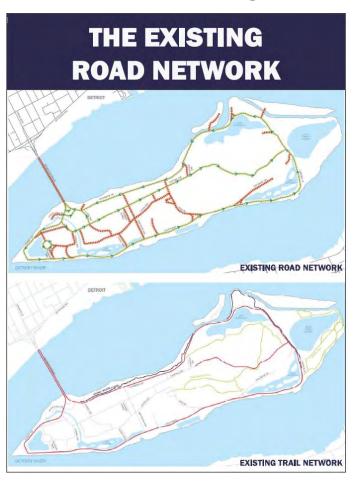
EASIER & SAFER ACCESS FOR ALL: ONE TO TWO-WAY CONVERSIONS

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

- One-way roads:
 - Are confusing, especially mixed with two-way roads
 - Create a safety concern, with crash data showing patterns related to one-way confusion
 - Lead to increased vehicle speeds creating uncomfortable conditions for biking and walking and conflicts between vehicles, bikers, and walkers
 - Require unnecessary travel distances to destinations.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Transition to two-way traffic for much of the network for improved circulation
- Simplify network into an understandable street pattern



THE PLAN FOR AN IMPROVED ROAD NETWORK



Both park visitors who enjoy cruising in vehicles and cycling the loop road support maintain current one-way circulation on the loop

FOR ALL

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

- Current conditions include a confusing lane configuration on Central Avenue
- Traffic control is not operating effectively
- Central Avenue lacks facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Central Avenue, the major spine of the island, becomes more people-centric
- Slowed traffic and on-street parking create a space designed for the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists while accommodating cars
- Central Avenue is a multimodal space which connects to a non motorized network as it terminates into the trail system



PARKING WHERE YOU NEED IT

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

- Key popular areas include the Casino, Museum/ Aquarium/Conservatory, Athletic Fields, and the Beach; two others are the Wilson Gateway and Nature Center
- Popular areas and core activities are not far away from each other and nothing is more than an 18-minute walk from a core area hub

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Establish activity hubs and get people to these areas efficiently and safely
- Each of the core areas includes a mobility hub with improved parking, maps, bike share, bus stops, walking distance information, electric car charging stations, scooters, Recreation Passport Kiosks, etc. that are all in one place connected to a non motorized network



CLEAR WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

- Signage currently on the island is confusing, out of date, and does not meet regulatory requirements
- Different types of signage are not coordinated with one another

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

 Focus of signage update is to create integrated wayfinding and regulatory signage & maps that are coordinated and unique to Belle Isle

DESIGN INSPIRATION





MOVING BEYOND THE CAR: ALTERNATIVE MODES

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

- Historic data tells us that multimodal options were always important on Belle Isle. Over the years, cars became the focus at the expense of other modes
- There is excitement and support for additional modes of arrival including ferry, off-island shuttle, bike rentals and bus service
- Condition of existing sidewalks and bike lanes are a major frustration
- The most popular areas are not very far apart the lack of a connected network accessible by people of all abilities is an issue

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Partner with other agencies and organizations to support improved bus service (DDOT), ferry service, bike share (MoGo Detroit) and electric scooter services
- Integrated network of mobility 'hubs' at priority locations
- Support all modes and abilities with appropriate additional services and information (maps, signage, etc.)



WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE SOON

WHAT WE HEARD AND LEARNED

 Near term improvements are important to safely and enjoyably arrive and use the island

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- While much of what you see requires planning and funding that may take 10-15 years...
- Short term improvements are coming!

WHAT YOU WILL SEE IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

BRIDGE

New pavement markings for vehicle and bike lanes

RIVERBANK

Re-marked angled parking from the beach to Inselruhe

• THE STRAND

Pavement resurfacing with new markings

RALPH C. WILSON, JR. TRAIL

Completion of trail with additional crosswalks

WAYFINDING

Initial implementation



Eugene and Elaine C. Driker Trail and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trail-

Progress Status:

- Construction bid documents due July 26,2023
- Trail will complete park loop
- Balance of trail to be complete in 2024.



Driker Trail complete, trailhead sign installed this week



July Update

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Island Stakeholders & Belle Isle Conservancy Community Engagement

BELLEISLE



SPRING/SUMMER FACILITY HOURS

(holiday hours may apply)

BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM

THUR-SUN | 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

BELLE ISLE NATURE CENTER

DAILY | 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

DOSSIN GREAT LAKES MUSEUM

WED-SAT | 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM | SUN | 1:00- 5:00 PM | S5/PERSON OR \$20 FOR SIX ADULTS AND CHILDREN WITH THE SAME ADDRESS. UNDER 6, FREE

OUDOLF GARDEN

DAILY | 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM

**ANNA SCRIPS WHITCOMB CONSERVATORY

CLOSED FOR CONSTRUCTION THROUGH MAY 2024

FOR BELLE ISLE UPDATES

TEXT GEM TO 80888

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

MONTHLY ON THE FOURTH THURSDAY





ISLAND OPEN 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM DAILY

BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE | JUNE STAKEHOLDER & ENGAGEMENT UPDATE



Island Stakeholder Updates

Detroit Boat Club Crew

Founded in 1839, the Detroit Boat Club Crew is the oldest rowing team in North America.

2023 US Rowing Youth National Championships in Florida.
Women's Youth 4+ Time Trial
(Carly Brown, Ava Sjogren, Olivia Bachert, and Ryleigh O'Donoghue)

Learn more about Detroit Boat Club Crew Programming and how to support at: www.detroitboatclubcrew.com

Island Stakeholder Updates

Oudolf Garden (Friends of The Oudolf Garden)

Oudolf Garden Detroit is a Four Season Garden!

3 Acre Garden inspired by the energy of Detroit after receiving a "love letter from Detroit" from The Garden Club of Michigan (GCM), Piet Oudolf designed this naturalistic public garden on Belle Isle filled with perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees for their hardiness, durability, and ever-changing textures and colors for enjoyment in all four seasons. Visit any time the park is open (year-round from 5 a.m.- 10 p.m.) (with the exception of special events).

Guided Tours are available by appointment, Monday through Thursday, for groups of 25 or more individuals. (Suggested \$5 donation.)

Directions: Oudolf Garden Detroit is easy to find on Google and Apple Maps. Parking is free, and picnic areas are available nearby. City bus service is also available to Belle Isle. Please check local schedules.

BOARDWALK CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN!

Visit oudolfgardendetroit.org for more info.



BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE | JUNE STAKEHOLDER & ENGAGEMENT UPDATE



Island Stakeholder Updates

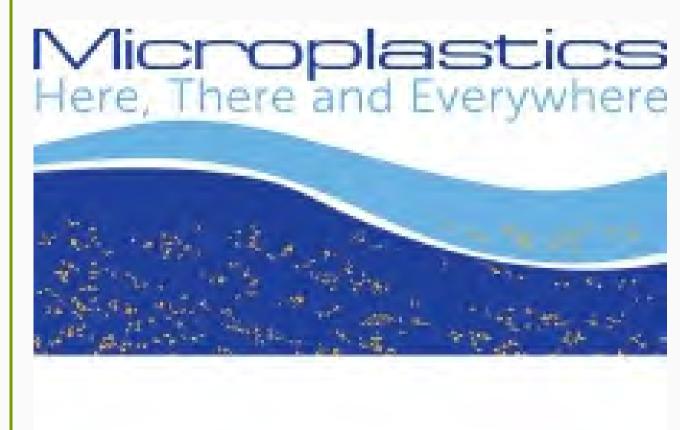
Belle Isle Nature Center (Detroit Zoo)

Open 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Daily | Free Admission

- TONIGHT | June 20 | 7-10 PM | Nature At Night Series
 - To explore how Belle Isle's wildlife lives under the night sky.
 - Guests will all have an opportunity to enjoy guided hikes in search of bats, notice the songs of summer insects and attract moths to observe them up close!
- Save The Date | Aug. 19 | 11 a.m. 4 p.m. | Bee Fest
- Reminder to check out the many hikes and nature adventure programs occurring regularly at the Nature Center.

belleislenaturecenter.detroitzoo.org for more info.





Island Stakeholder Updates

Dossin Great Lakes Museum (Detroit Historical Society)

Open Wed -Sat 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM and Sun 1:00- 5:00 PM Admission: Free Under 6, \$5 for adults and Children \$20 for a single household (up to 6 parents and children) For more information, visit detroithistorical.org.

FREE ADMISSION DAY | Saturday, July 22, 2023, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 22 for the <u>Antique Outboard Motor Club Meet</u>.

Check out the Microplastics Here, There, Everywhere exhibit (through April 2024)



Belle Isle Multi-Modal Mobility Study Feedback Closes

Weigh in on a series of recommendations to improve Belle Isle mobility

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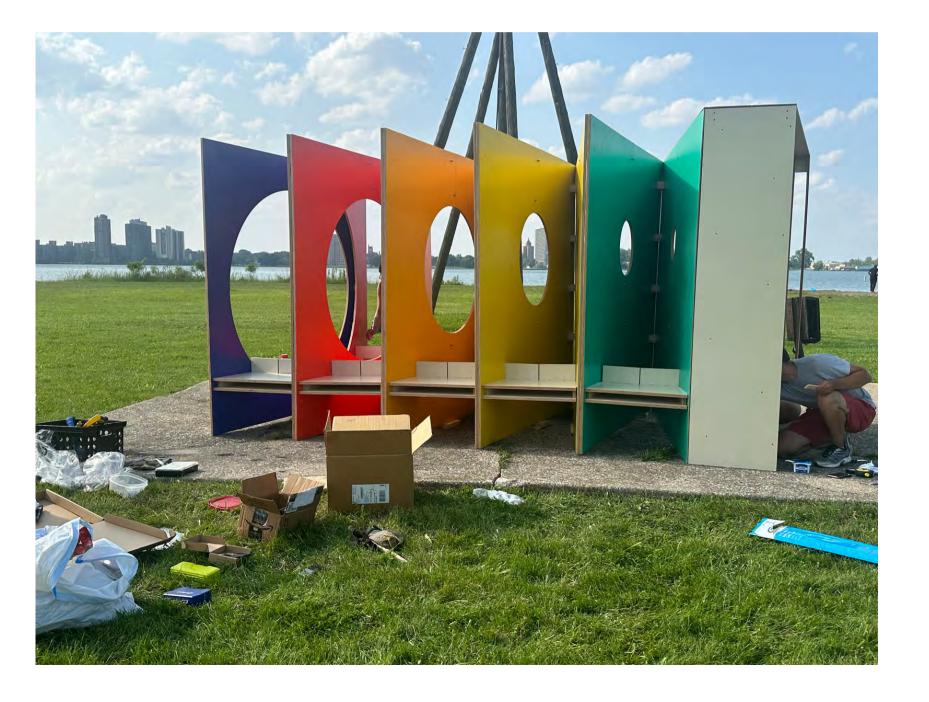
Watch recorded presentation detailing recommendations »

Feedback can be made via email at <u>TreadwellA@Michigan.gov</u> or by phone at 313-261-5059. Comments will be accepted through Monday, July 24.





Wahnabezee Story Booth Installation Underway!

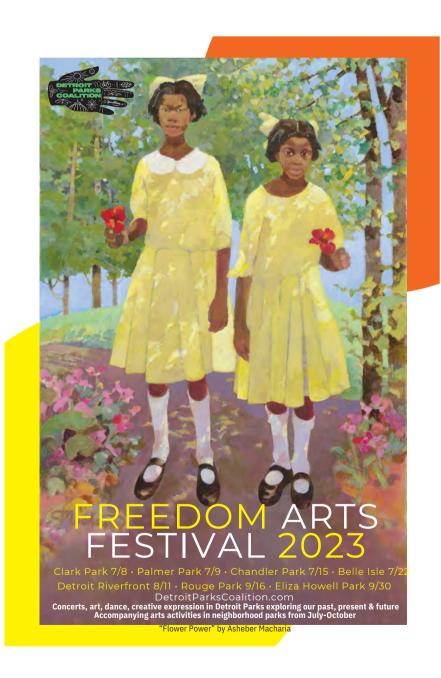


In Partnership with Detroit River Story Lab and U of M Taubman School of Architecture, Belle Isle Conservancy is building a digital archive.

This project (for U of M) also explores: (1) climate uncertainty requiring attention to the impacts on the island's landscapes and cultural institutions; and (2) the park as a pluralistic cultural commons instigating the re-examination of past and present [hi]stories and imagined futures.



Community Fun Day at Belle Isle Aquarium in Partnership with Detroit Parks Coalition Freedom Arts Festival



- 1. Bedrock Office of Community Growth and Development Giveaways
- 2. Belle Isle Art Fair (Coloring Activities and Invitations to the upcoming Belle Isle Art Fair)
- 3. Belle Isle Conservancy Community Engagement (Feedback Collection, Information about BIC, The Aquarium, and our upcoming programming)
- 4. The City of Detroit, Office of Council President Mary Sheffield
- 5. Communities First (Play Activation with Activities and Games)
- 6. Cyanotype Workshop (led by Cranbrook Art Museum as a companion to <u>Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other</u> exhibition currently on display)
- 7. <u>Detroit Public Library</u> Giveaways (150 Children's activity kits)
- 8. <u>Metropolitan Museum Of Design Detroit</u> (Display on Biomimicry & Honoring Black Design, signage, and info about our current exhibition MODDITTIES and Odd organisms)
- 9. Source Booksellers (Storytime and Book Sales)
- 10. <u>Wahnabezee Story Booth</u> Satalite, in Partnership with Detroit River Story Lab and U of M Taubman School of Architecture
- 11. Wayne State University Press (Book Giveaways)
 - a.300 copies of BEAVER TALE <u>A Beaver Tale | Wayne State University Press</u> Illustrated, ages 8-12 (and younger). This book is all about beavers returning to Detroit.
 - b. 300 copies of MAIL BY THE PAIL Mail by the Pail | Wayne State University Press illustrated for ages 4-12. This book is about our unique postal delivery system to freighters passing by on the Detroit River.
- 12. Performances



Movies Under The Stars in Partnership with Communities First



Apr - Sept

Keep Belle Isle Beautiful Public Clean Up Season

Second Friday - Belle Isle Beach | Third Saturday - Belle Isle Aquarium

Jun 9 - 18

World Ocean Day Exhibition at Belle Isle Aquarium

Belle Isle Aquarium

Jun 15 - Aug 31 | 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Belle Isle Aquarium Summer Thursdays -- Presented by Huntington Bank

Jun 15 - Aug 31 (Thursdays | 6:00 PM)

Yoga In The Parks w/ Detroit Parks Coalition and Yoganic Flow Belle Isle Aquarium

Jun 23 - Sept 2 | Fri & Sat | 10:30 AM & 11:30 AM

Belle Isle Aquarium Outdoor Aquatic Science Investigation Session (OASIS)

Jul 21 (Wall-E) & Aug 11 (Puss in Boots: The Last Wish) | 6:30 PM

Movies Under The Stars w/ Communities First

Belle Isle Athletic Fields

Jul 22 | Noon - 4:00 PM

Community Fun Day w/ Detroit Parks Coalition Freedom Arts Festival

Belle Isle Aquarium

Jul 30 & Aug 20 | 9:00 AM

Sound Bath with Amplify Outside and BLOOM Transformation Center

Belle Isle Aquarium

Aug 18

BIA & ASWC 119th Anniversary of Opening Day

Sept 16

International Coastal Clean Up Day



Scan here for the digital calendar or visit <u>belleisleconservancy.org/summercalendar</u>



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA! @BELLEISLEAQUARIUM







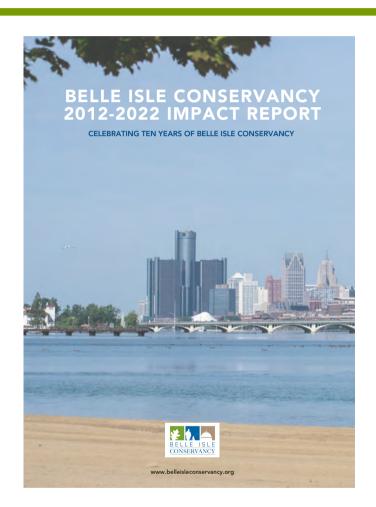




Belle Isle Conservancy Impact Reporting



Watch the 2023 Annual Belle Isle
Update to Detroit City Council
Here



Ten-Year Impact Report Now Available

Belle Isle Aquarium Hours 10:00 AM-4:00 PM Thursday -Sunday

Visit www.belleisleconservancy.org for more information.

