



# Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Date: February 15, 2024

Location: Virtual

Meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

Quorum established at 9:16 a.m.

### Roll Call

#### Present for BIPAC

Michele Hodges, Chair

Michael Curis

Angela Lugo-Thomas

Megan Elliott

Rev. Lonnie Peek

#### Excused

Sommer Woods

#### DNR Staff Present

Ron Olson

Tom Bissett

Karis Floyd

Gail Fitch

Amanda Treadwell

Barbrea Young

Erika Compton

Lt. Todd Szyska

Marie Kaphengst

Darlisa Terrell

#### Others Present

Lance Couturier, MSP

Genevieve Rattray, Belle Isle Conservancy

Maud Lyon, Belle Isle Conservancy

Dee Dee Martin, Belle Isle Conservancy

Amy Greene, Nature Center Director, Detroit Zoological Society

Andrew Hartz, EGLE

Chair Hodges called the meeting to order, addressing the excused absence and proceeded with the updates agenda item as there was not a quorum present at the time.

## **General Updates**

### **Parks and Recreation Update**

Chief Olson updated the group on the department budget that was announced last week and the plan to revisit the Recreational Passport opt-out proposal as well as to afford military veterans a free Passport. Legislative hearings will take place in a few weeks and the department will keep the committee informed as these items move through the process. A reporter from the Detroit Free Press interviewed some department and Belle Isle Conservancy staff for an article on the history of Belle Isle.

Tom Bissett thanked the Dossin for hosting the meeting. He then addressed the streetlight issue and said 50 of the about 207 streetlights have been replaced. They will be testing more of them as most of the lights have come to the end of their lifespan. This weekend is Free Fishing weekend which does not require the Recreation Passport or a fishing permit in all of the state parks. The permit booths are open and staffed and he encourages people to stop by and purchase a Recreational Passport if they have not done so when renewing their vehicle registration. Scaffolding for the Conservatory will be coming down after the glass installation, however, this has been delayed due to the weather. Central Avenue will be closed through March to preserve the roadway, and salting and plowing will not occur during this time.

Karis Floyd continued that they just completed the second lead ranger interviews so will be filling the vacancy soon and are also hiring two additional seasonal rangers with interviews to be held sometime this month. All seasonal staff have now returned from layoff; earlier than what they have done in the past. About 50 new picnic tables have been completed.

Rev. Peek joined the meeting, establishing a quorum. Chair Hodges shifted the meeting back to addressing the agenda action items.

Chair Hodges then addressed the first action item, Resolution 02-2024-01, which was brought forth for the purpose of enabling the committee to conduct the business of the BIPAC remotely. Being able to do this has improved engagement with the community, so therefore they would like to continue having this option. She asked for any discussion.

Member Curis stated that he supports the resolution as it allows for more public involvement, but that he does like holding the meetings in person and on the island as well.

Member Lugo-Thomas asked for clarification if this allows for them to meet virtual. Chair Hodges confirmed that it allows them the option, but to Member Curis' point, the commitment to being in person facilitates better decision-making, awareness, and team building.

MOTION: With no further discussion, Chair Hodges asked for a motion to support resolution 02-2024-01 to approve the bylaw amendment. The motion was moved by Member Peek, supported by Member Lugo-Thomas, and passed unanimously.

MOTION: Chair Hodges then asked for a motion to approve all outstanding meeting minutes. The motion was moved by Member Curis, supported by Member Peek, and passed unanimously.

The meeting continued with updates.

#### Law Updates

Lt. Szyska said they are still in winter operations. He reiterated the 25-mph speed limit on the island and said he is appreciative of the signage. Lt. Courtier said the troopers have been responding to mental distress calls that have luckily ended favorably. He encouraged the public to refer any of these issues to the professionals in the hospitals.

#### Infrastructure Updates

Amanda Treadwell gave a presentation of infrastructure project updates around the island, including ARPA funded investments. Presentation is attached.

Member Elliott joined the meeting.

Belle Isle Conservancy Updates were provided by Dee Dee Martin and attached.

#### Public Comment

Sawyer – Would like to see the canals that run through the island opened up.

Robin Heller – Thanked the group for having a hybrid meeting. The Daffodil Luncheon is April 17. Tickets can be purchased at:  
<https://www.michiganwnfga.org/daffodil-day-ticket-shop.html>

Lisa DiChiera, Deputy Director, City of Detroit Historical Designation Advisory Board – Informed everyone that the board sent a letter to Director Bowen in full support of a rehabilitation stabilization plan for the boathouse as well as the City Council's recently passed resolution urging the DNR to use the \$2 million ARPA dollars for stabilization, not demolition.

Stephen Malbouf – Wanted clarification on the posting of the RFP and spoke of the timeline of the reports on the boathouse and subsequent follow through.

Chair Hodges closed the meeting by thanking the Dossin for hosting the group.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Next regular meeting: Thursday, March 21, 2024.

# **RESOLUTION NO. 02-2024-01**

## **BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BIPAC)**

### **RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BIPAC) BYLAWS**

**ADOPTED: February 15, 2024**

**WHEREAS**, the BIPAC was established as part of the lease between the City of Detroit and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in 2013;

**WHEREAS**, the lease established the BIPAC and the purpose and how appointments would be made;

**WHEREAS**, the BIPAC established and adopted Bylaws that included the framework for the meetings, frequency, etc.;

**WHEREAS**, the Bylaws included the reference to comply with the Open Meetings Act given that the committee is advisory;

**WHEREAS**, the COVID special meeting rules were established to allow for public bodies to conduct their charge and business remotely;

**WHEREAS**, the rules have now expired, however for non-statutory created advisory groups that do not have Regulatory Authority may conduct their business remotely or in person if the reference to the Open Meetings Act is removed from the bylaws;

**WHEREAS**, since the virtual option has worked well over the past three years it has enabled attendance to be more convenient and has enabled the public to engage easier than in person. The committee has attempted to resume in-person meetings, however securing a quorum has been challenging. We have verified this approach with the DNR legal counsel and following this process is permissible.

**WHEREAS**, the meetings will be conducted openly, and all records and announcements will be conducted consistent with the Open Meetings protocols.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, it is recommended that the BIPAC Bylaws be amended to remove the reference to the Open Meetings Act requirements so that the committee can meet at its option, in person, remotely, or in a hybrid format so that the committee can meet its quorum and enable regular public engagement.

Submitted by: Ronald A. Olson, Chief, Department of Natural Resources

**Motioned by: Lonnie Peek**

**Seconded by: Angela Lugo-Thomas**

**Yeas: 4**

**Nays: 0**

**Abstained: 0**

**Absent: 2**

***This Resolution was adopted by the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee at their meeting as Resolution No. 02-2024-01.***



# Belle Isle Park Infrastructure Updates

February 15, 2024



# Aquarium and Conservatory

## Facility development plan for site.

- Critical facility projects
  - Aquarium HVAC
  - Facility ADA accessibility

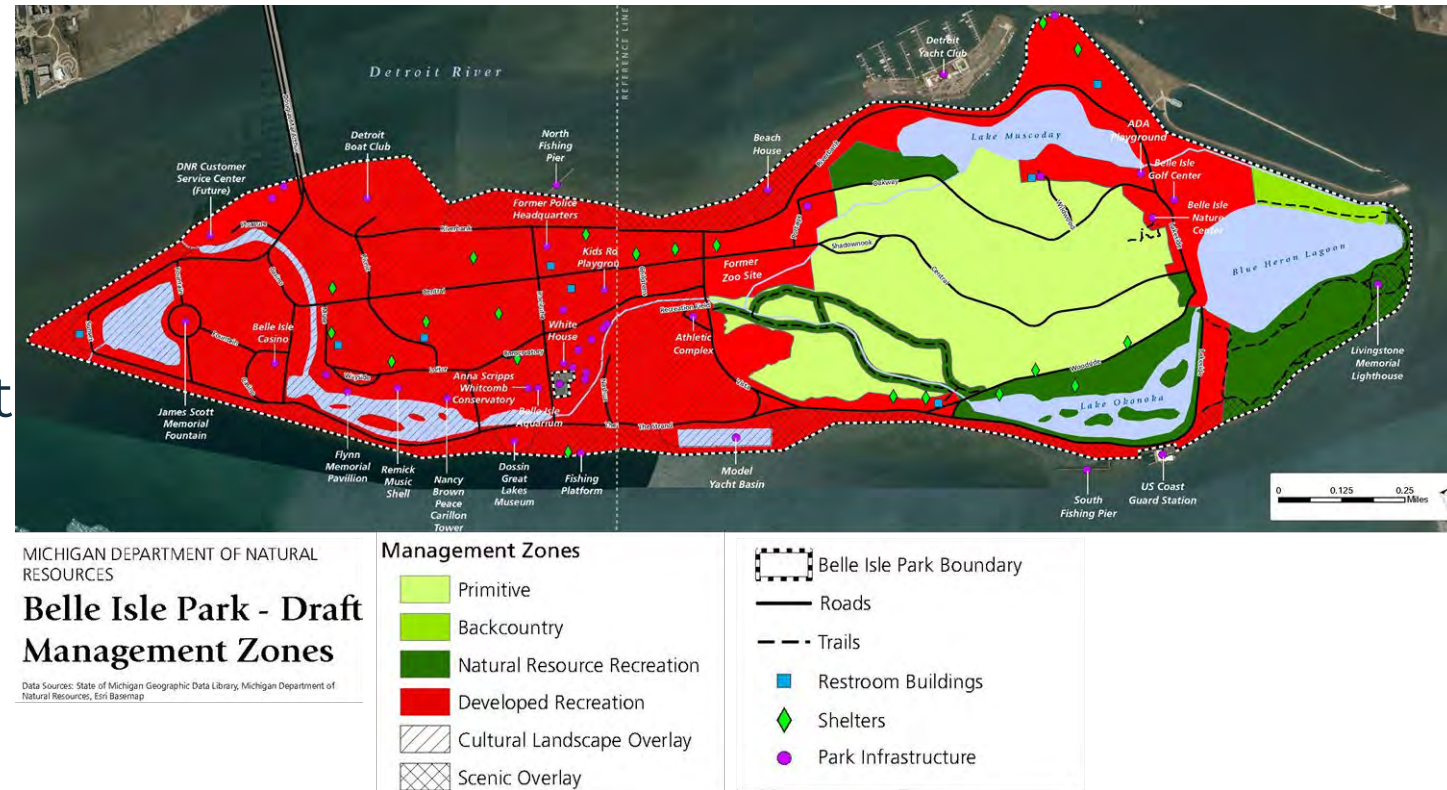


Scope area for Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory plan

# Park Strategic Development Plan

## Parkwide plan to guide future investment

- Plan will build upon previous studies completed. Including,
  - Park Strategic Management Plan
  - Multimodal Mobility Study



Management zones defined in Strategic Management Plan

# ARPA funded investments

## Parkwide & Site Investments

- Hazardous material remediation
- Former zoo structure removals
- Boathouse: 2-track program
  - - Request for Letter of Intent for rehabilitation proposals
    - Specifications and permits for removal



*Structures throughout the 20-acre zoo will be removed with ARPA funds.*

# Belle Isle Multimodal Mobility Study

## Stakeholder Presentation January 24<sup>th</sup>

- Evaluating options to keep one-way vehicle traffic intact, while addressing the overall goals of improving safety and enjoyment for all park users.
- To accommodate ongoing work and ensure alignment with key partners, we've extended the mobility study completion timeline to spring 2024
- DNR and MDOT are working together to implement study recommendations.



*Proposed multimodal routes in review*

# — PUBLIC INPUT DROVE CHANGES

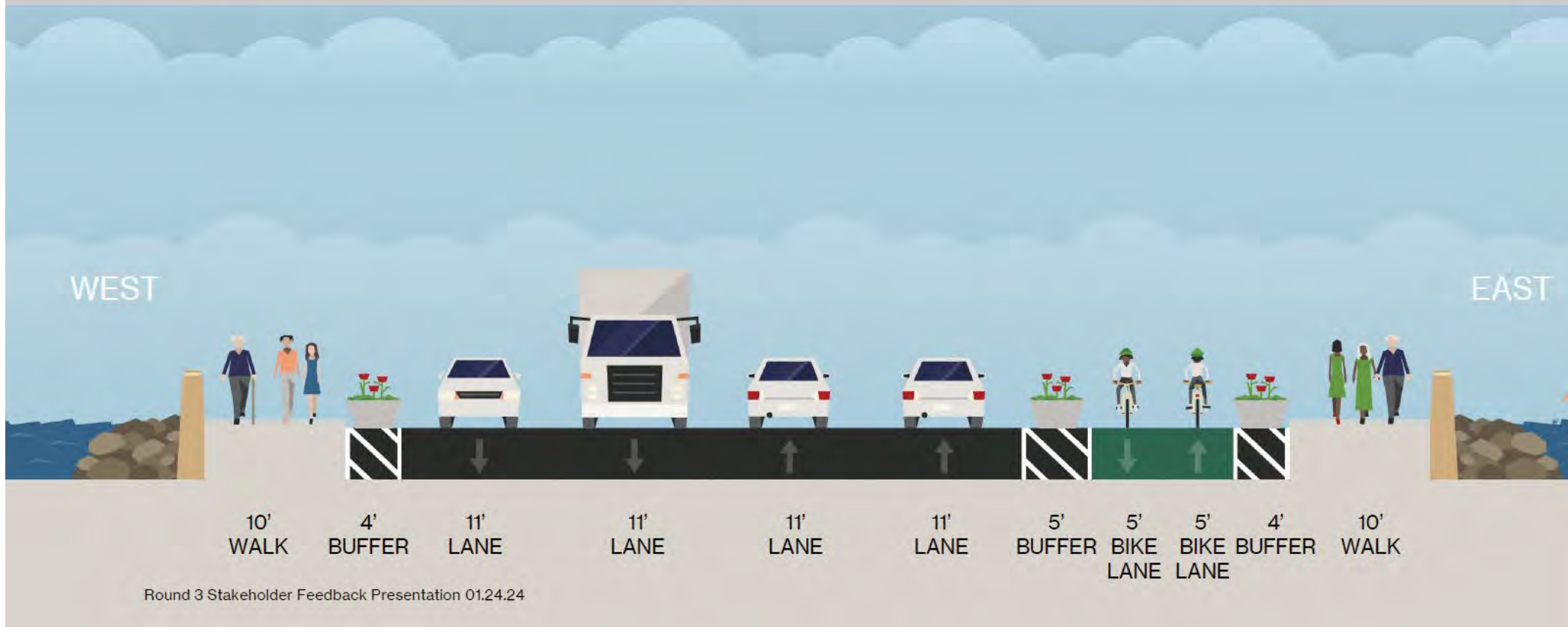
The input we received was thoughtful and varied, with support for most of the proposed changes, but a strong desire to keep the loop road one-way was expressed by a variety of users

# — SUPPORT FOR

- ✓ Improving the bridge and entry experience for all visitors
- ✓ Adding new wayfinding signs to help visitors better understand how to move around the island
- ✓ Turning Central Avenue into a people-focused promenade while still allowing for slow-moving vehicular traffic
- ✓ Working with a variety of providers to continue to improve other modes of arrival including bike share, improved bus routes/stops and determining feasibility of a ferry stop at Belle Isle
- ✓ Improving promotion and awareness of Recreation Passport
- ✓ Increasing parking at the most popular areas but decreasing parking and pavement where it's not needed
- ✓ Improving designs and facilities for walking and biking such as measures to slow speed of vehicles, improve crosswalks, add more sidewalks, and include designs that reflect the varied types of bicyclists and size of bicycling groups

# — PROPOSED BRIDGE

Looking toward Jefferson



# A WELCOMING BRIDGE & ENTRY EXPERIENCE

Ralph Wilson Trail being completed in 2024

Round 3 Stakeholder Feedback Presentation 01.24.24

# JEFFERSON + GRAND BOULEVARD



Improvements to this intersection are key to improving access to and from the island.

DNR and MDOT would like to continue to coordinate with the City to design and implement improvements as soon as possible.

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# CLARIFYING WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE



Existing signage can be confusing, inconsistent, cluttered, out of date and not meet regulatory requirements

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# DESIGN INSPIRATION

- Arrival & Wayfinding
- Supporting all modes of transportation
- Coordinated look and feel
- Simple, up-to-date Maps (print and online)
- Information available in multiple languages

HISTORIC PARK  
STRUCTURES



DETROIT HISTORY



NATURE



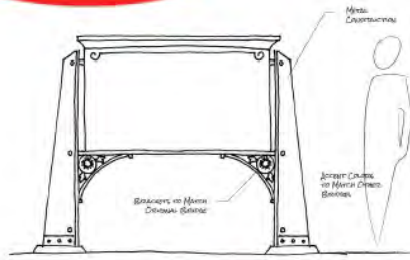
BRIDGES



# WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

## 1 CONCEPT ONE BRIDGES

DESIGN FEATURES:  
• Incorporate the Design Architectural Elements  
• Bridge-like structure over the Dark Lane Bridge

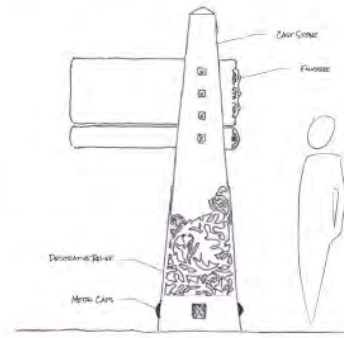


### INSPIRATION IMAGES



## 2 CONCEPT TWO OBELISK

DESIGN FEATURES:  
• Simple & Thin  
• Durable and Beautiful

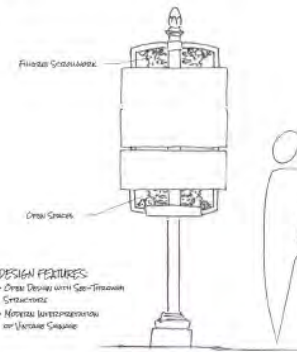


### INSPIRATION IMAGES



## 3 CONCEPT THREE FLUTEE

DESIGN FEATURES:  
• Clean Design with Geo-Inspired Structures  
• Minimal Interference with Visual Signage

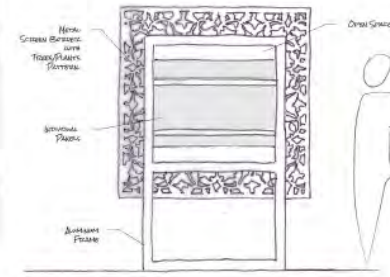


### INSPIRATION IMAGES



## 4 CONCEPT FOUR NATURE

DESIGN FEATURES:  
• Incorporate the Natural Elements  
• Geo-Inspired Structure  
• Minimal Interference

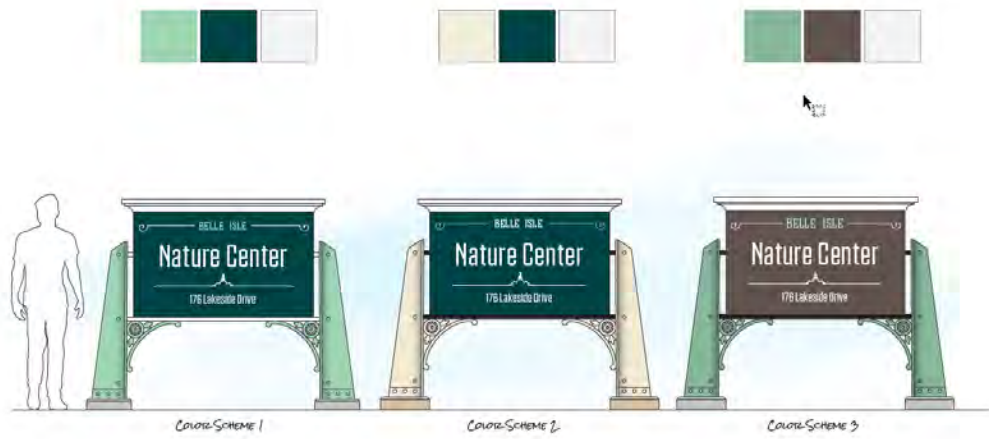


### INSPIRATION IMAGES



Identification signs, vehicular, directional, pedestrian kiosks, etc are being developed based on this preferred concept

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Colors - 2

CORBIN  
DESIGN

Colors - 4

CORBIN  
DESIGN

Colors - 5

CORBIN  
DESIGN

# SUPPORT FOR

- ✓ Improving the bridge and entry experience for all visitors
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- ✓ **Turning Central Avenue into a people-focused promenade while still allowing for slow-moving vehicular traffic**
- ✓ Working with a variety of providers to continue to improve other modes of arrival including bike share, improved bus routes/stops and determining feasibility of a ferry stop at Belle Isle
- ✓ Improving promotion and awareness of Recreation Passport
- ✓ Increasing parking at the most popular areas but decreasing parking and pavement where it's not needed
- ✓ Improving designs and facilities for **walking and biking** such as measures to slow speed of vehicles, improve crosswalks, add more sidewalks, and include designs that reflect the varied types of bicyclists and size of bicycling groups



## CENTRAL AVENUE FOR ALL

- Promenade with a pedestrian and bicyclist focus down center with slow vehicular traffic on either side
- Get people where they want to go while trying to avoid directing vehicles onto Central as much as possible

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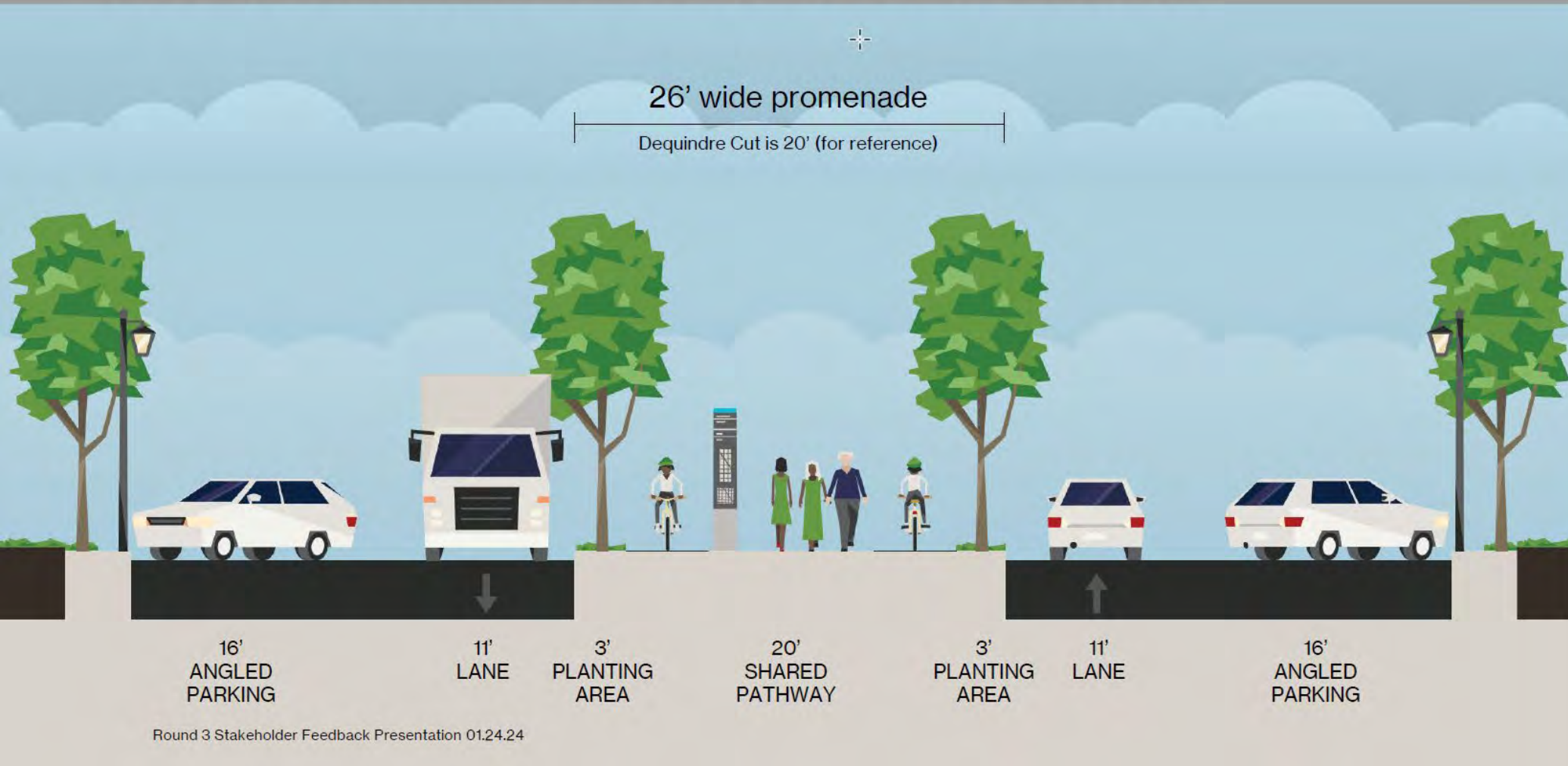
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## Historic Aerial



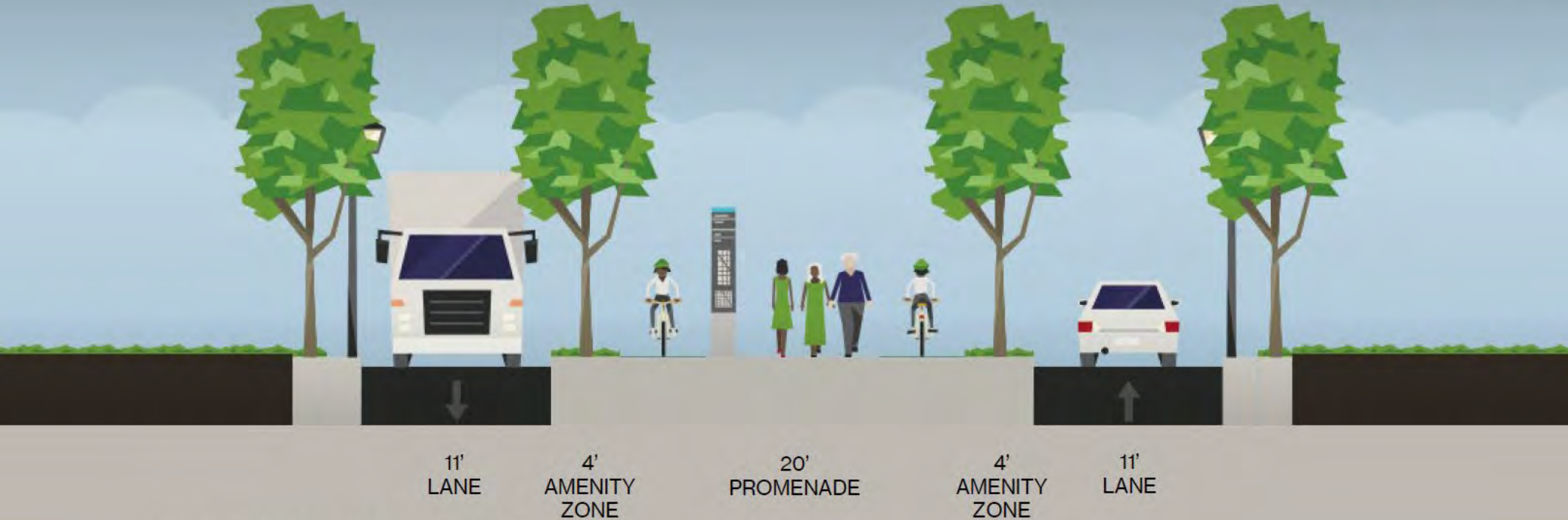
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# PROPOSED CENTRAL AVENUE





# — CENTRAL AVE SOUTH



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# CENTRAL AT FOUNTAIN

No vehicles



5'  
AMENITY  
ZONE

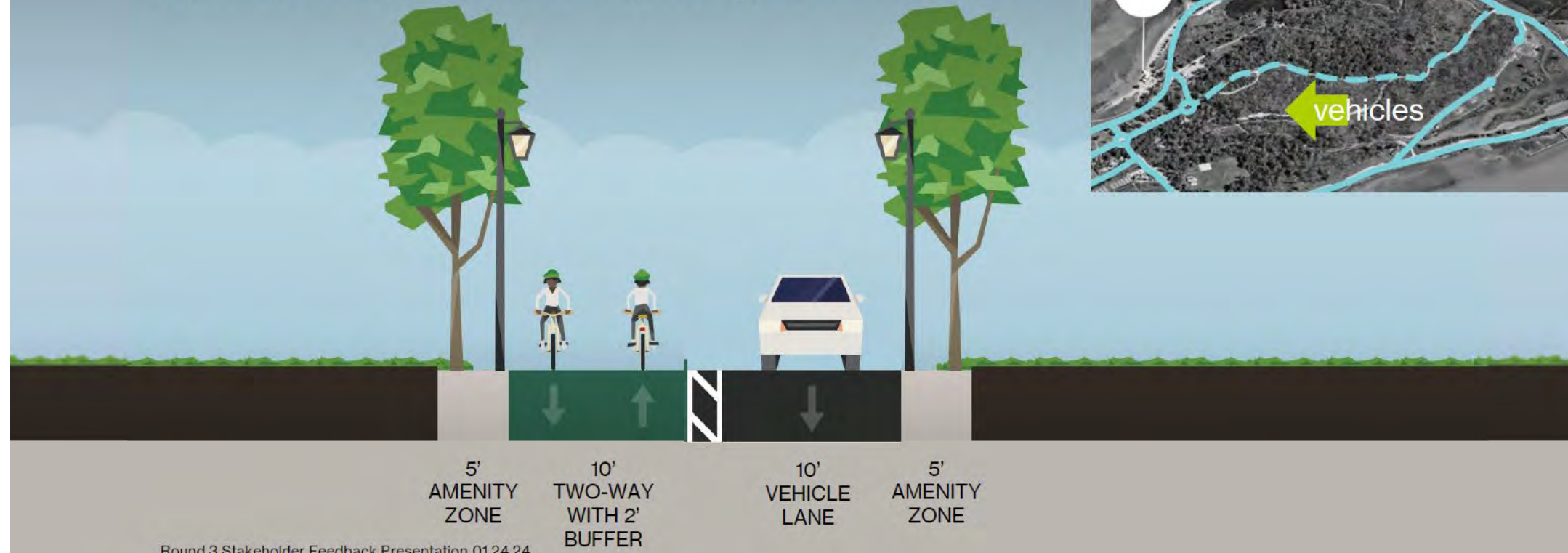
20'  
PROMENADE

5'  
AMENITY  
ZONE

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# CENTRAL FLATWOODS

- Reverse vehicular traffic direction (west) to limit Central as a cut through
- Two-way bike lanes
- Option to function as ped/bike only during peak times or events



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# SUPPORT FOR



Improving the bridge and entry experience for all visitors



Adding new wayfinding signs to help visitors better understand how to move around the island



Turning Central Avenue into a people-focused promenade while still allowing for slow-moving vehicular traffic



**Working with a variety of providers to continue to improve other modes of arrival including bike share, improved bus routes/stops and determining feasibility of a ferry stop at Belle Isle**



Improving promotion and awareness of Recreation Passport



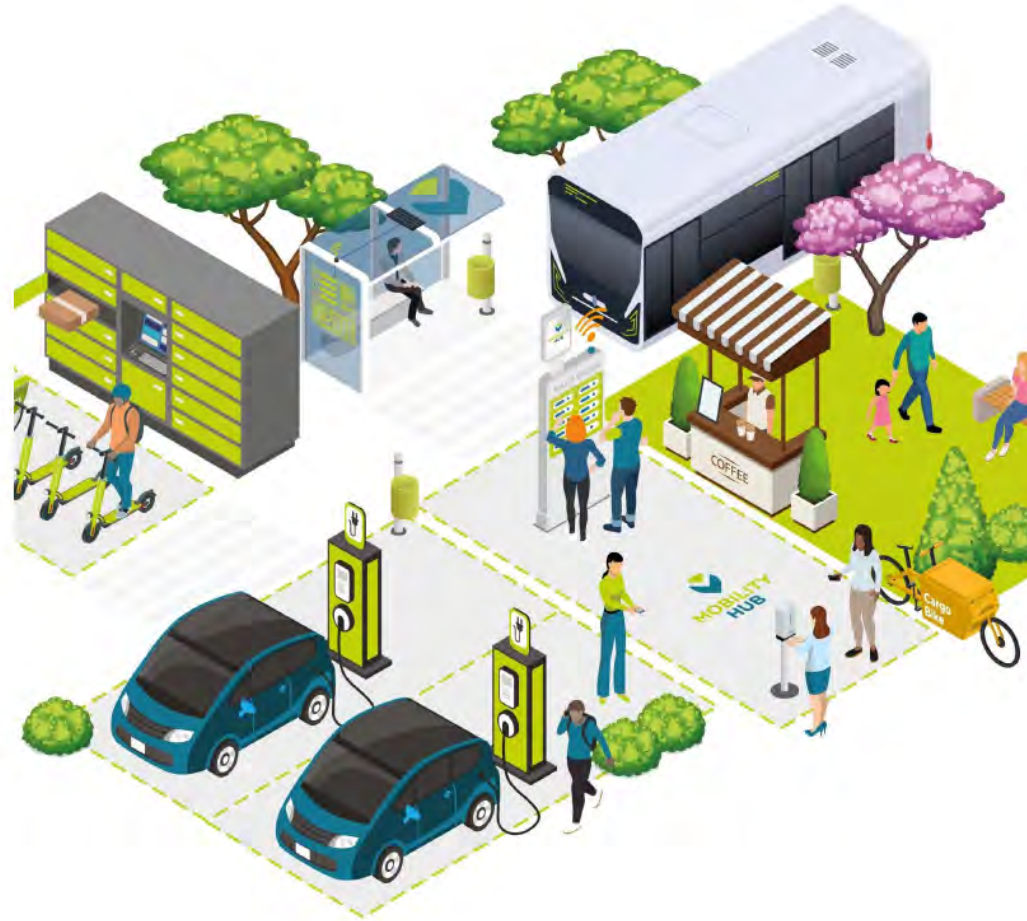
Increasing parking at the most popular areas but decreasing parking and pavement where it's not needed



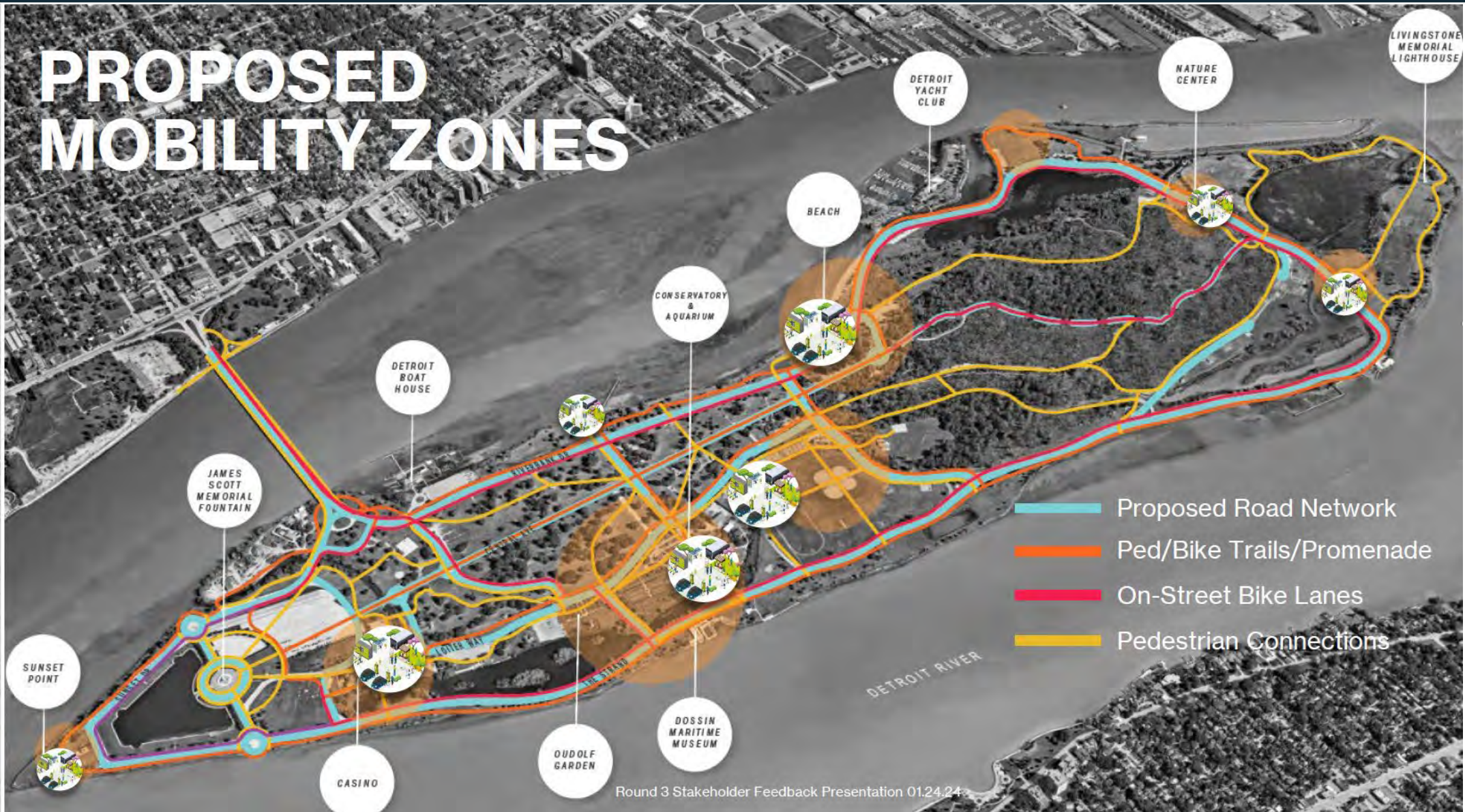
Improving designs and facilities for **walking and biking** such as measures to slow speed of vehicles, improve crosswalks, add more sidewalks, and include designs that reflect the varied types of bicyclists and size of bicycling groups

# MOBILITY ZONES AT POPULAR AREAS

Improved parking, informational maps, bike share, bus stops, walking distance information, electric car charging stations, Recreation Passport Kiosks, etc. all in one place **connected to a non-motorized network**

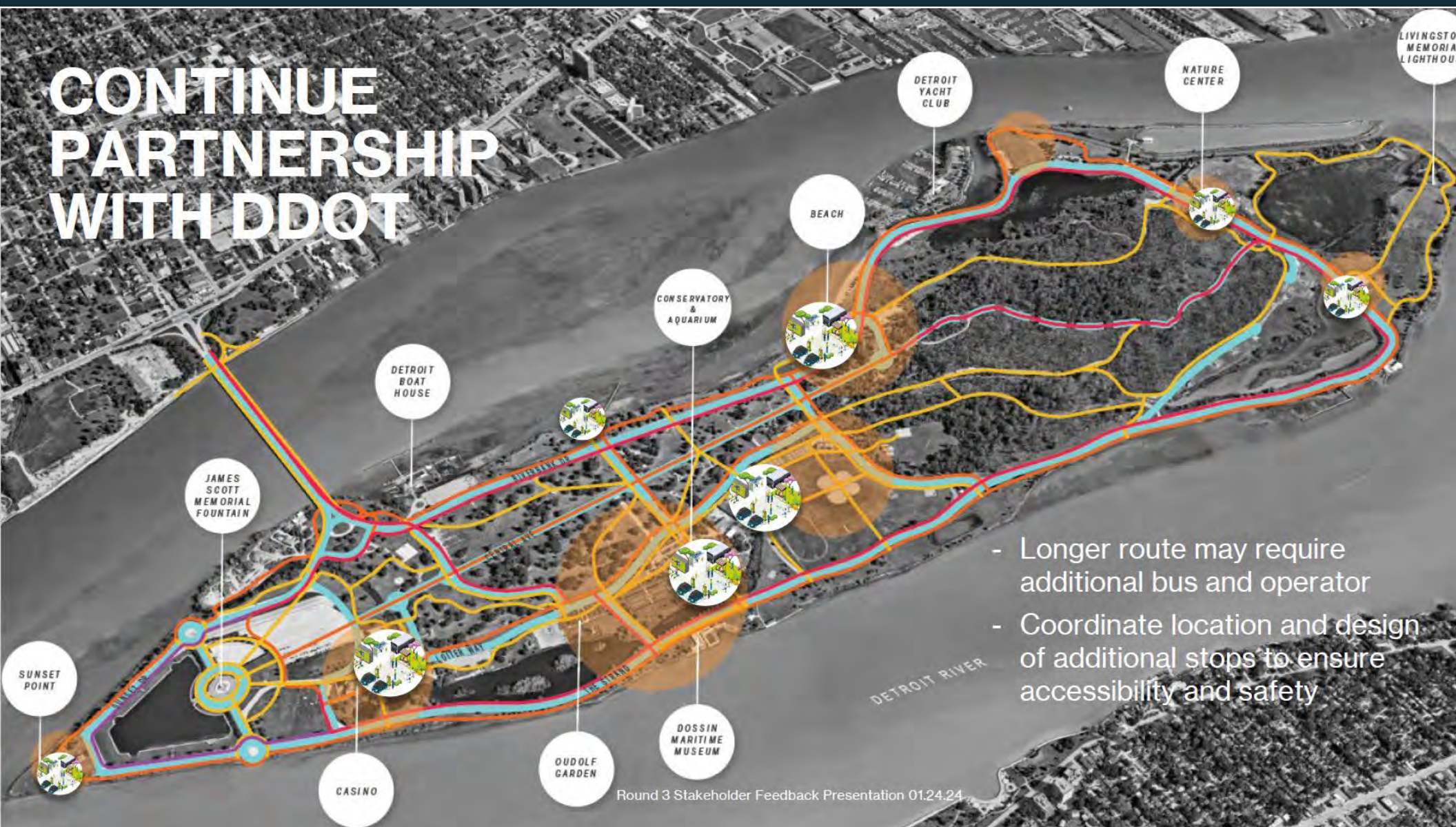


# PROPOSED MOBILITY ZONES



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# CONTINUE PARTNERSHIP WITH DDOT



- Longer route may require additional bus and operator
- Coordinate location and design of additional stops to ensure accessibility and safety

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# RECREATION PASSPORT CAMPAIGN

## Improve Promotion within the Park

- Improve entry signage to state “Recreation Passport holders bypass lane”
- Make Passport purchases available at ALL mobility zones within the park
- Utilize banners throughout the park, informational kiosks, message board signage to promote purchase of the Recreation Passport.
- Promote statewide use of the Recreation Passport.



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# REDUCE IMPERVIOUS SURFACE AND IMPROVE SAFETY



Round 3 Stakeholder Feedback Presentation 01.24.24

An aerial photograph of a city intersection. The intersection features a large, circular stormwater management area painted with blue and white wavy patterns, resembling a river or a stylized 'S'. This area is surrounded by a concrete curb. The intersection has white crosswalks and a blue-painted bike lane on the left side. Several cars are visible on the streets, and there are trees and buildings in the background.

# REDUCE IMPERVIOUS SURFACE AND IMPROVE SAFETY

Round 3 Stakeholder Feedback Presentation 01.24.24

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# COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT OUTER LOOP ROAD



Majority of the community would like the outer loop road to remain one-way



We've been working on evaluating how to keep **one-way traffic around the outer loop for vehicles** while still being able to address the overall goals of **improving safety and enjoyment for all park users**



# ACCOMMODATE A VARIETY OF USERS



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# — ONE-WAY OUTER LOOP ROAD

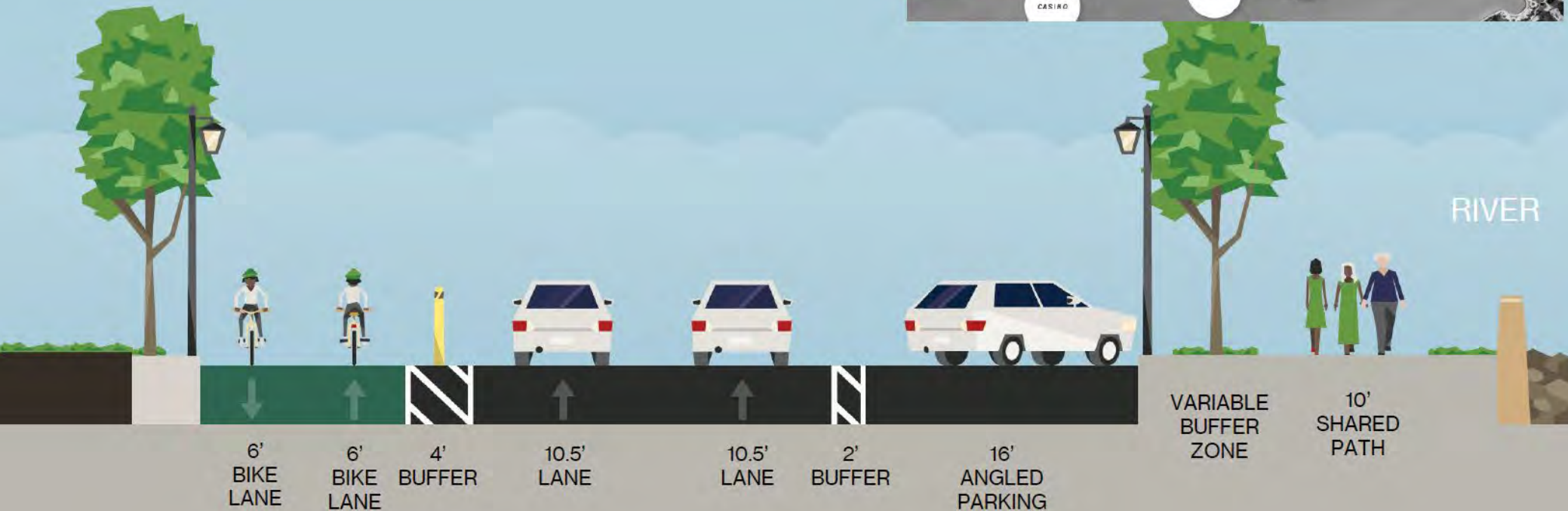
- **One-way** loop remains counterclockwise for **vehicles**
  - 2 lanes on majority of loop / 1 lane on the east end of the island
- **Two-way buffered bike lanes** on the interior side of the loop road
- Road cyclists have right to a lane
- **Pedestrians** use the Iron Belle Trail and connecting sidewalks and trails
- **Enhanced crosswalks** at several key locations around the loop
- Parking retained on exterior side of road
- Emergency vehicle access maintained

# OUTER LOOP



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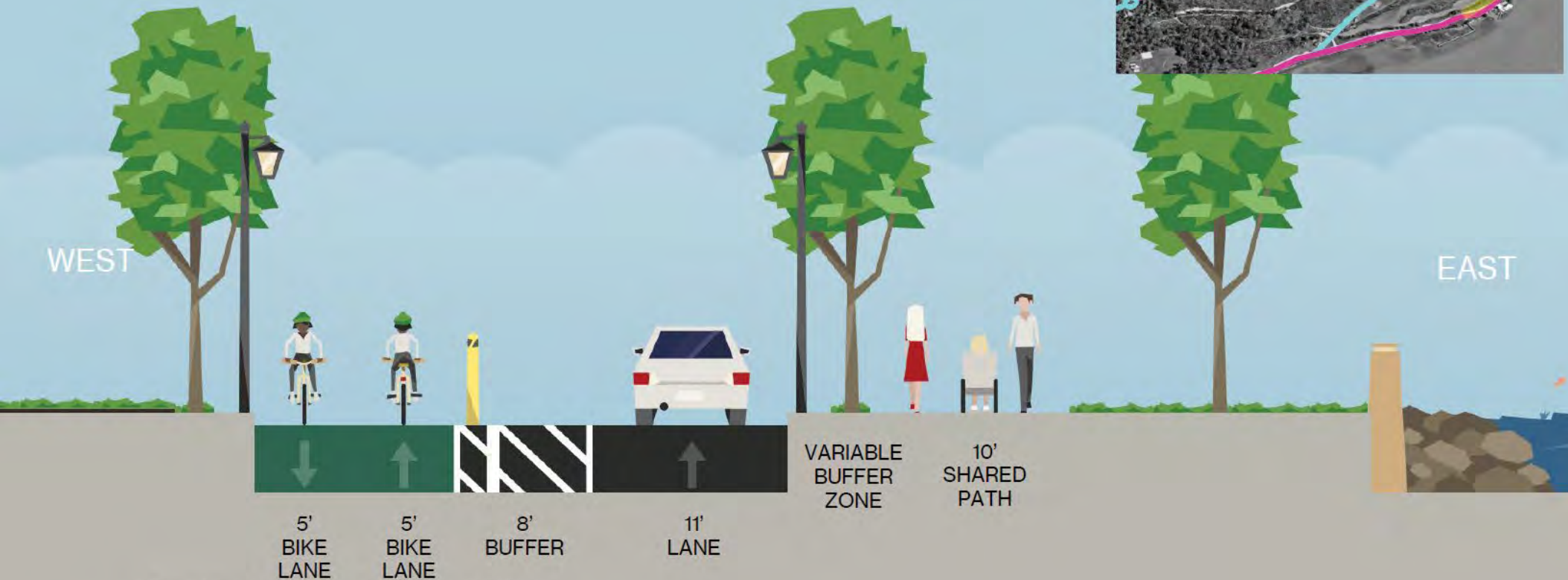
# THE STRAND



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# LAKESIDE

- Maintain emergency vehicle access
- Turn lane into Nature Center



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# RIVERBANK

NORTH

SOUTH



20'  
SHARED  
PATH

Illustrates long-term desire to  
widen/expand the Iron Belle Trail

VARIED  
BUFFER  
ZONE



16'  
ANGLED  
PARKING



2'  
BUFFER



10.5'  
LANE



10.5'  
LANE



7'  
BUFFER



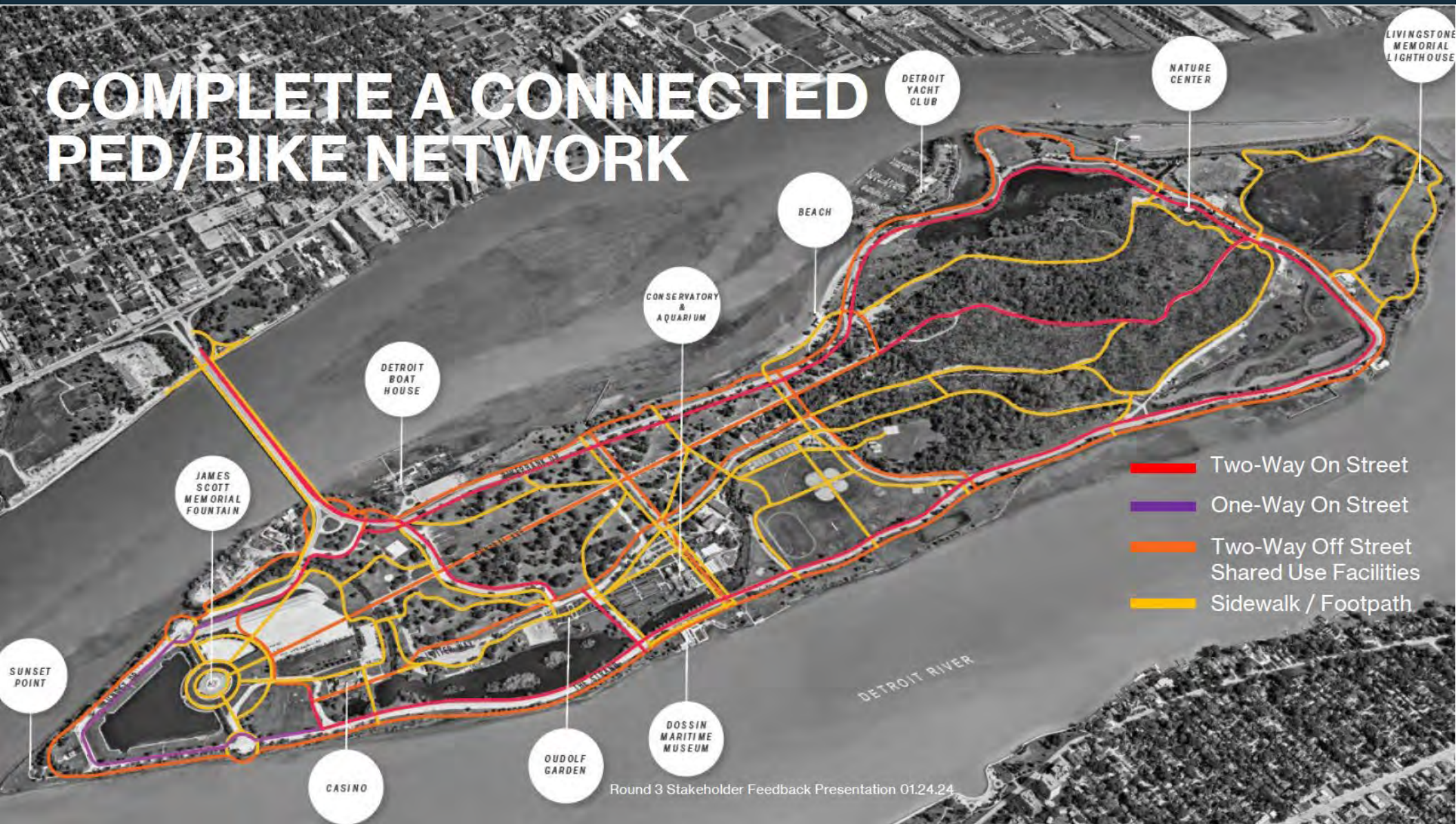
6'  
BIKE  
LANE



6'  
BIKE  
LANE



# COMPLETE A CONNECTED PED/BIKE NETWORK



# — ON-STREET BIKE FACILITY DESIGN



- Two-way bike lanes using the interior side of the loop road
- Some separation/bollards/curbing/green paint in highest need areas, but not along the entire length to allow bicyclists to move into the vehicular lane if traveling as a large group or going very fast

# — PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

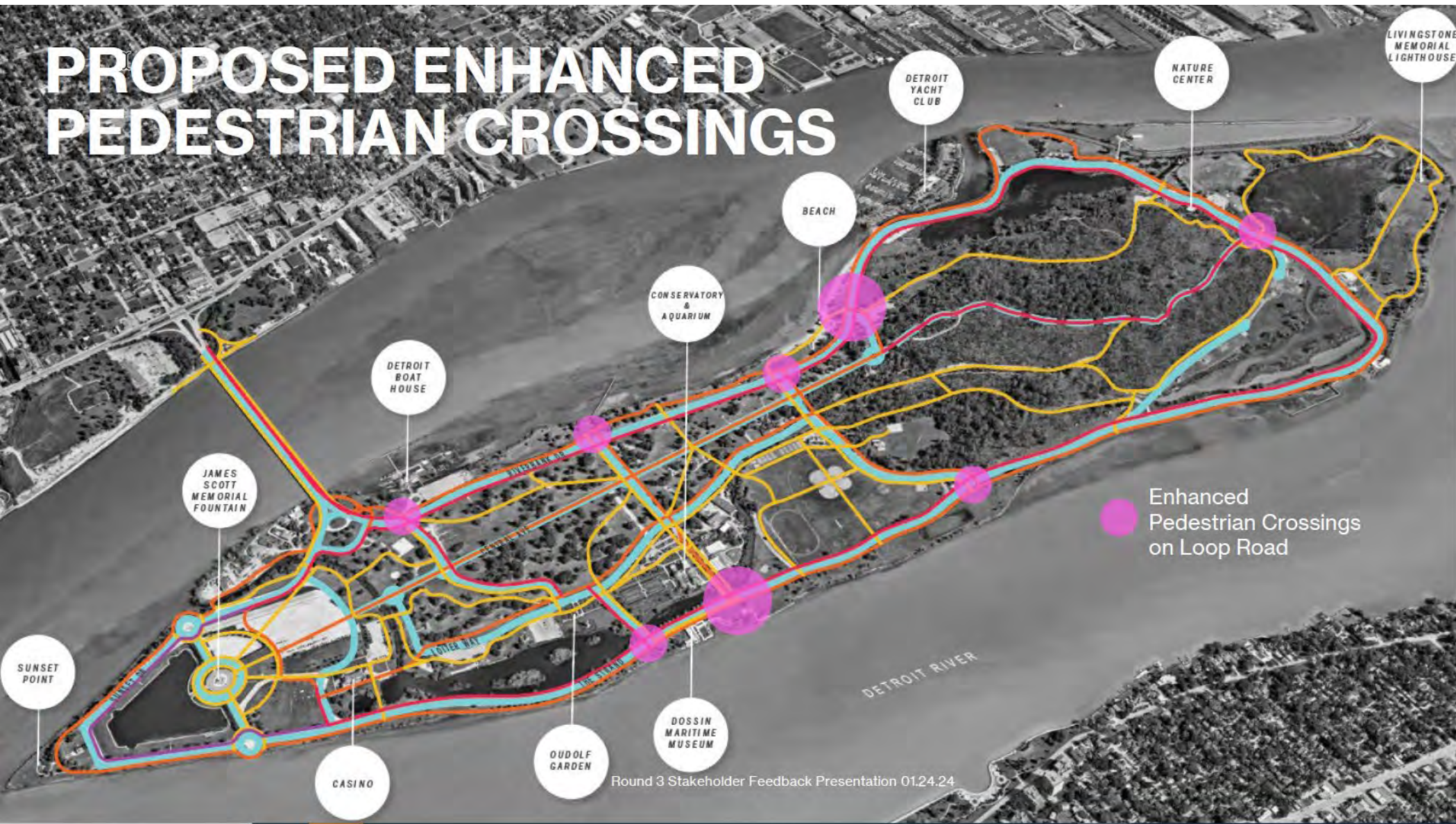


- Pedestrians use the Iron Belle Trail and connecting trails and sidewalks
- Enhanced pedestrian crossings at several key locations around the loop



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# PROPOSED ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS



# NEXT STEPS

- **Develop & Share Final Report and Graphics** Spring 2024
- **DONcast Presentation** Spring 2024
- **Implement final recommendations over time and in conjunction with MDOT, the City, and other partners as funds become available**
- **Changes Coming In 2024:**
  - Build final 3.2 miles of the Ralph Wilson Trail around exterior of the island to complete the network
  - Begin Phase One of the wayfinding signage package
  - Flatwoods trail opening
  - Additional projects as budget is allocated



BELLE ISLE  
CONSERVANCY

**BIPAC Updates 2/15/24**



## ***Core Volunteers***



**2022**

**150 volunteers**

**2023**

**121 volunteers**





## ***Service Hours***



**2022**  
**6,347 hours**

**2023**  
**7,453 hours**





## ***Orientation Attendees***



**2022**

**31**

**2023**

**50**



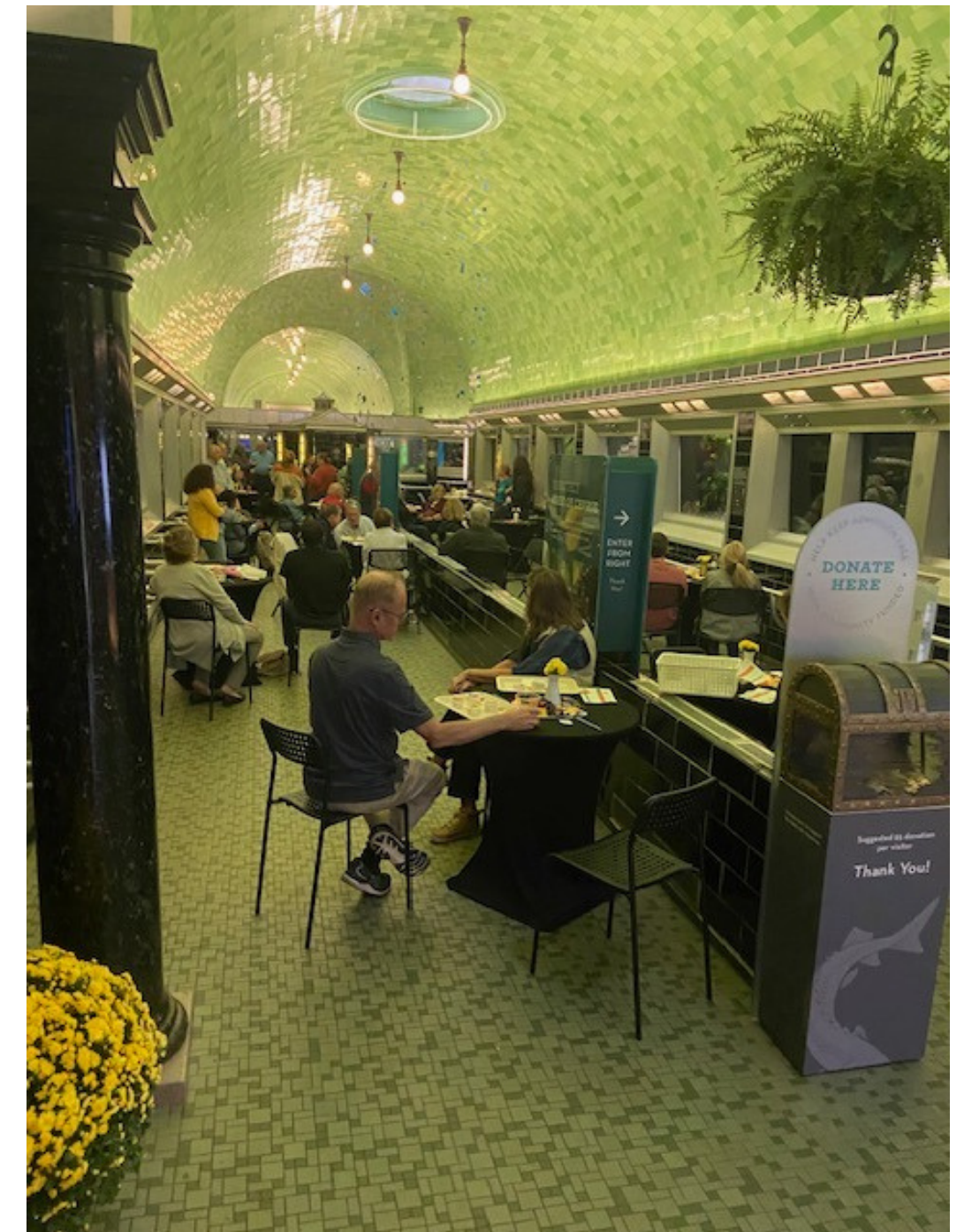


## **Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory**

**Volunteer program currently on hold  
until ASWC reopens**

# ***Appreciation, Recognition and Ongoing Education!***

- **Four Appreciation Events**
- **Two Education Sessions**
- **Mary Waterstone Award**





- **BIA currently reconstructing several tanks; new cuban gar habitat and combining three marine tanks into one community tank.**
- **Upcoming Important Dates:**
  - **April 18 - The Daffodil Luncheon**
  - **April 27 - Keep Belle Isle Beautiful day**
  - **May 16 - Polish the Jewel**