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Joe Louis Greenway Framework Plan

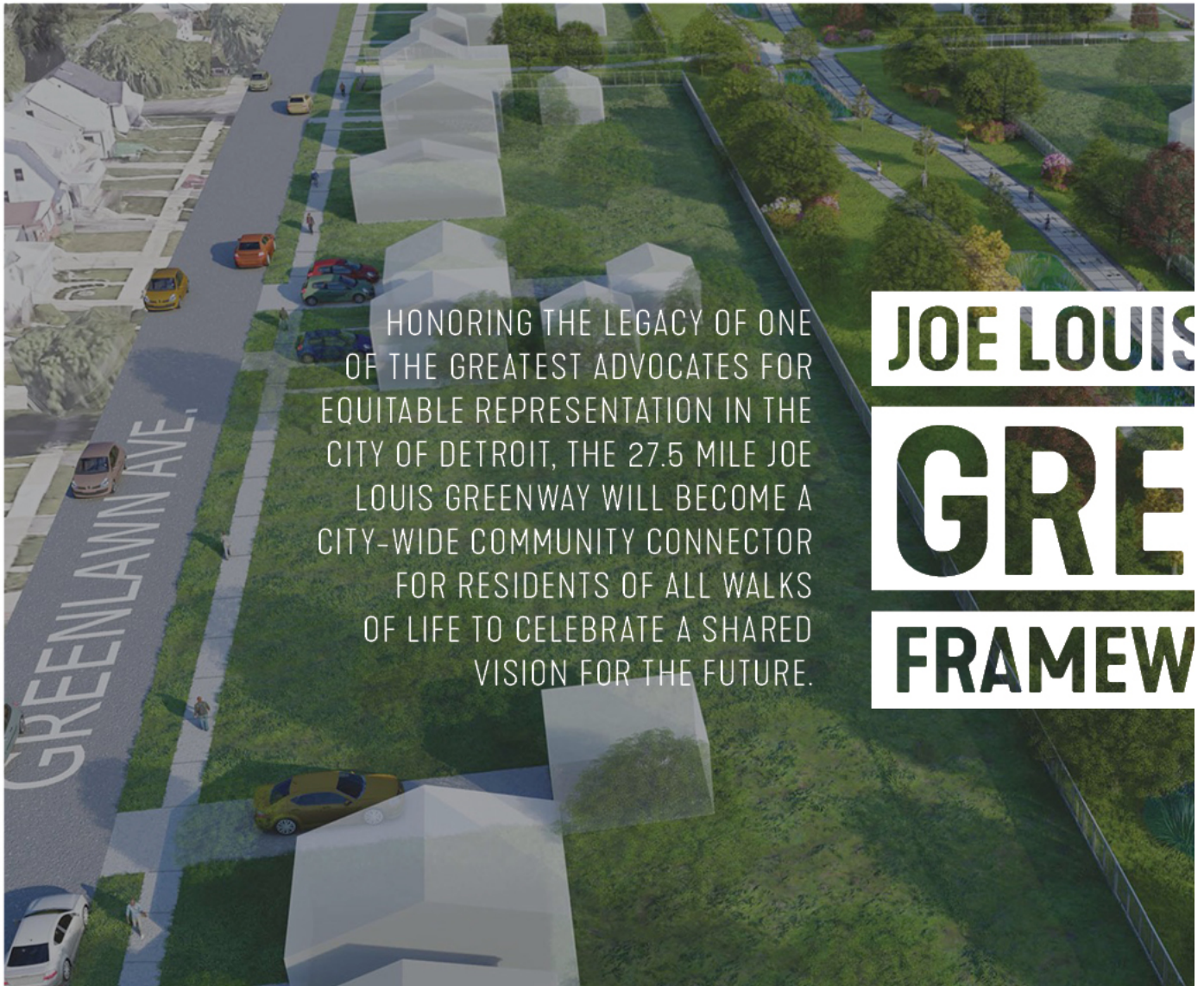
Honor Award

Analysis and Planning

Detroit, Michigan, United States

[SmithGroup](#)

Client: City of Detroit



The Introduction

The plan provides connected, equitable, and engaging spaces to find opportunities for empowerment, unification, and healing in honor of Joe Louis.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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THEMATIC VALUES

FOR THE JOE LOUIS GREENWAY

Resident input coalesced around the following 7 areas of focus that are reflected throughout this plan.



ARTS & CULTURE



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



HISTORY



CONNECTION



HOUSING & COMMUNITY



ENVIRONMENT



**RECREATION,
SAFETY &
MOBILITY**

The Legacy

Resident input coalesced around seven key areas of focus that are reflected throughout the plan and capture the spirit of Joe Louis and his legacy.

Image Credit: Graphic: Studio Incognita, Images: Getty Images

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"You could sense their passion—community residents who volunteered hours of their time to provide their insight and ideas to create a greenway that truly **strengthens and unifies** the neighborhoods it touches."



The Route

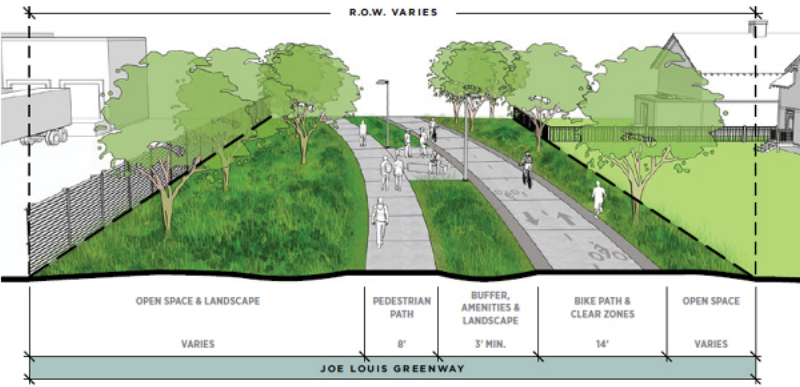
Shaped by community needs and priorities, the path traverses a variety of ecosystems, neighborhoods, cultures, cities, and environments.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

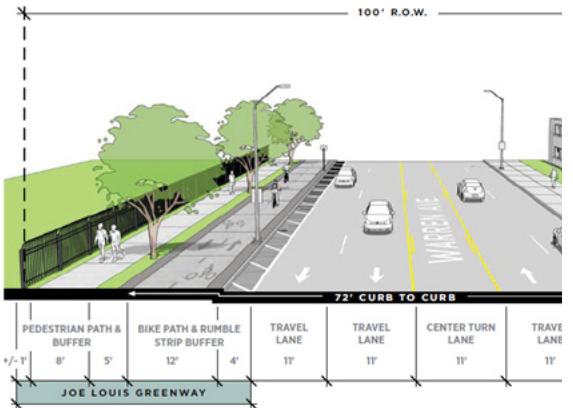
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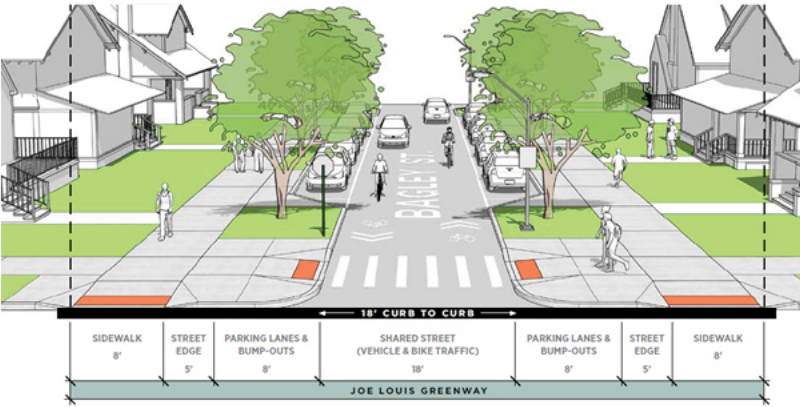
OFF STREET



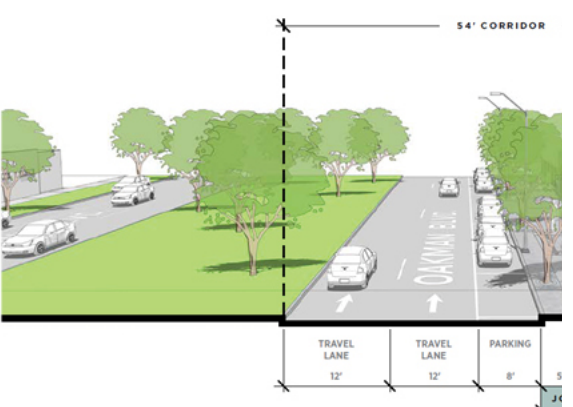
ON STREET



SHARED STREET



OFF-STREET ADJACENT



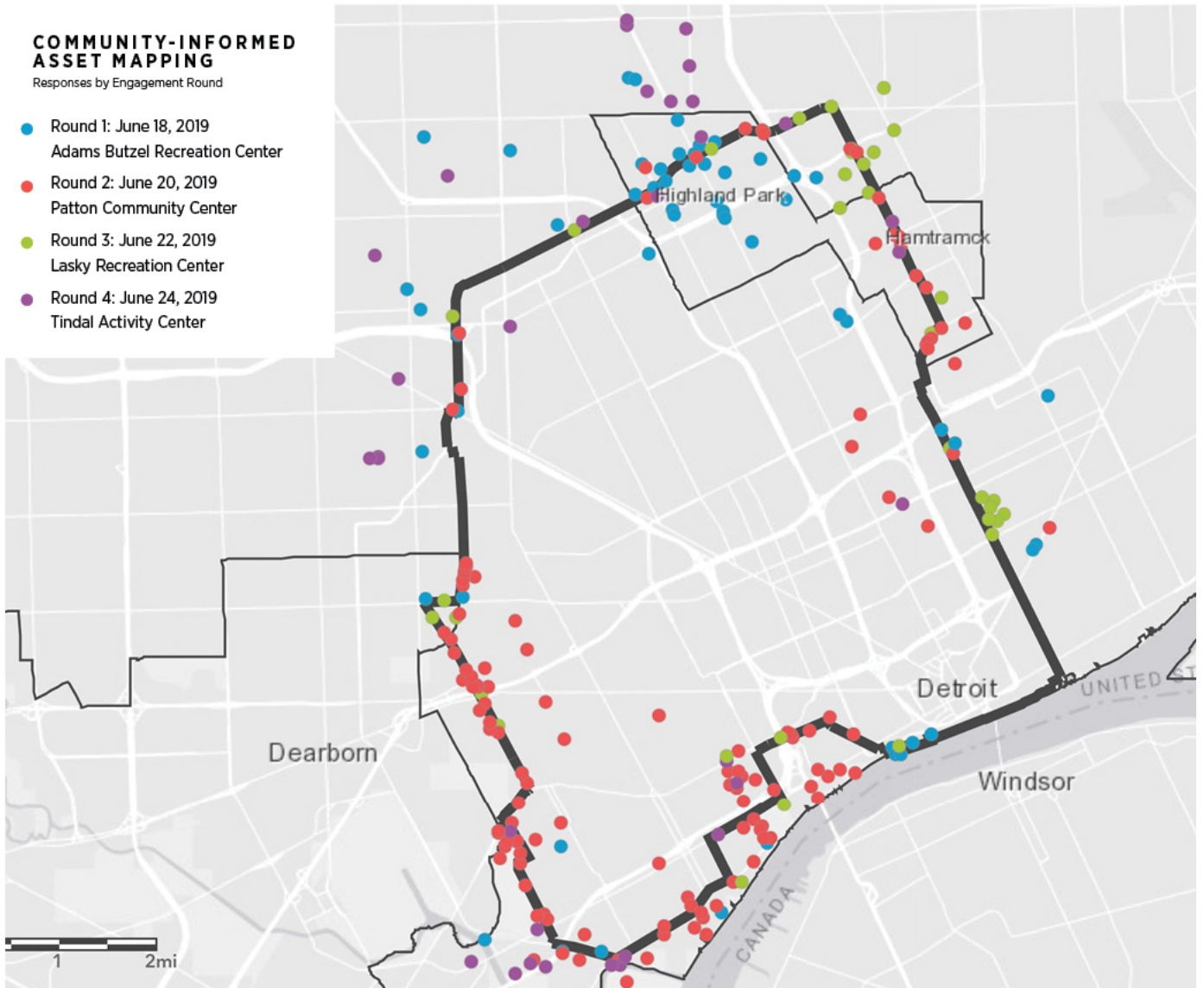
The Typologies

The plan provides recommendations for the wide range of conditions found along the greenway to guide future design and implementation.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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The Engagement

Active participation from the community created a vision that guided the framework plan development and was at the forefront of the planning process.

Image Credit: Graphic: SmithGroup; Image: James Brown

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The Toolkit

Each phase of the research and design process centered around outreach and workshop events that encouraged input, feedback, participation, and design.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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The Arts

The plan provides the platform from which expression and activation may occur while creating a visual identity that flows throughout the greenway.

Image Credit: Map: SmithGroup; Branding: Studio Incognita

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The Beautification

Through significant clean-up efforts, the greenway transforms previously neglected neighborhood sites into beautifully coordinated pathways.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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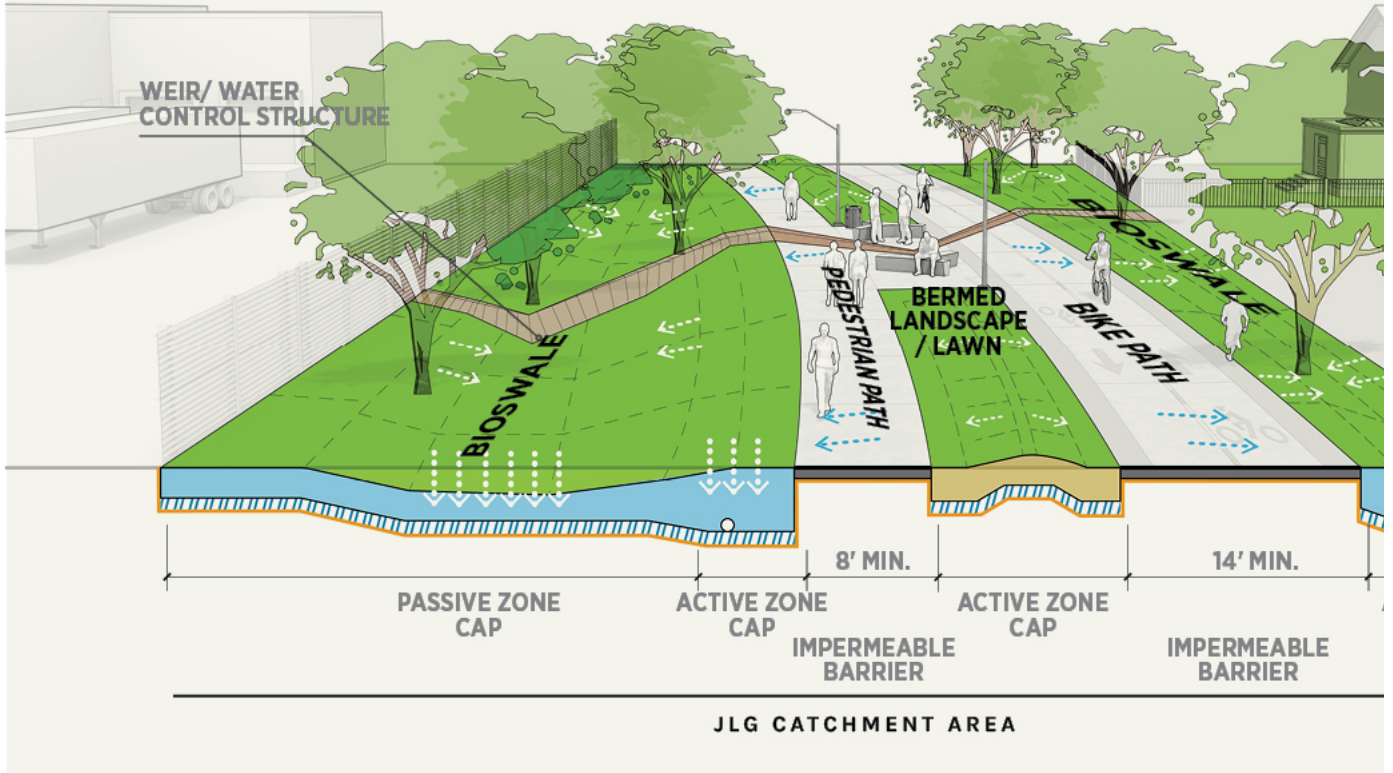
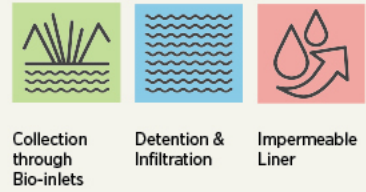
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OFF-STREET

Suitable Greenway Segment Types: #1, 15, 19

In off-street areas with the potential for below-grade leaching of contaminated materials to the groundwater, an impermeable clay or GCL liner restricting infiltration will need to be provided.

PRACTICE ELEMENTS



The Resiliency

Each typology was looked at to not only make the path user friendly, but safe and sustainable through various green, resilient design practices.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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People walking | Kids | People hanging out | Families | Seniors
 People walking dogs | People with disabilities

Runners & Joggers

Bicyclists | Electric scooters | Rollerbladers | Skateboarders
 Electric bikes | Bikes with trailers | Cross country skiers



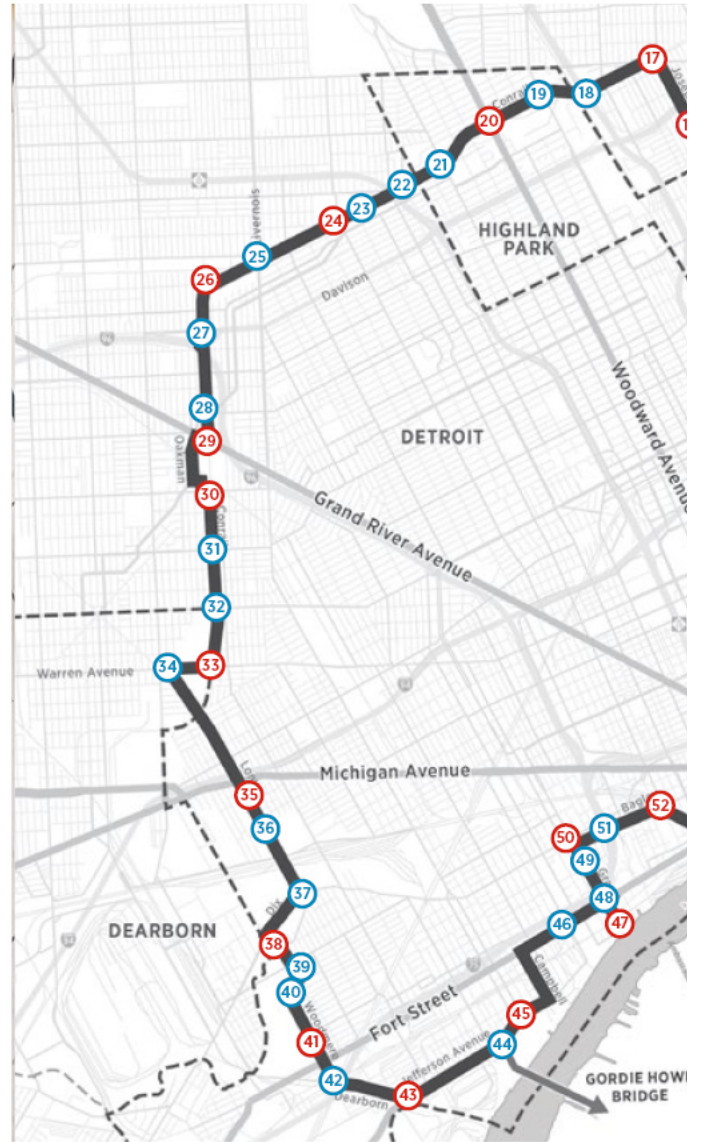
The Design

This plan identifies groups who will commonly use the greenway—and provides guidelines that are responsive to both their shared and unique needs.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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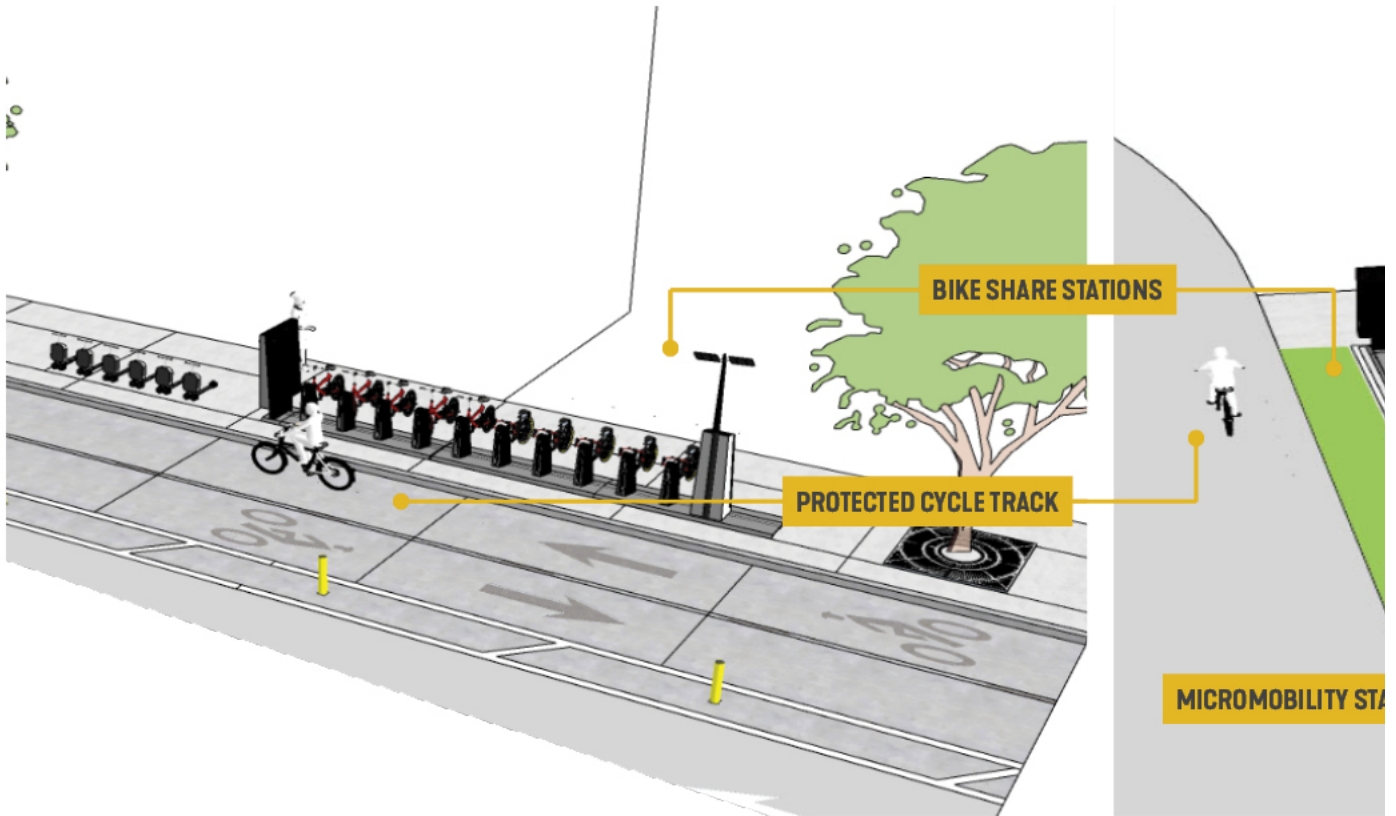
The Accessibility

The greenway will utilize new and existing access points for all residents through ADA compliance with physical, visual, and auditory accommodations.

Image Credit: SmithGroup

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We see the city differently when we're not in a car. **Detroit has so much to offer.** When you're outside, exploring, interactive—it gives life to this city.



The Micromobility

The plan reviewed the emerging impact of micromobility centered around connectivity and safety based on best practices in comparable cities.

Image Credit: SmithGroup & Toole Design

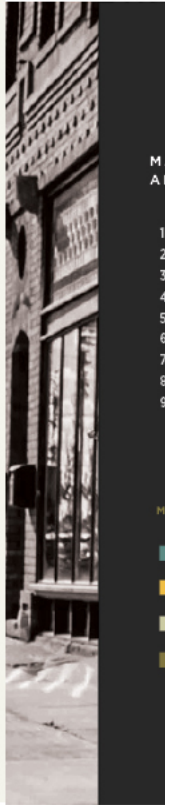
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RESPONDING TO CURRENT CONDITIONS

The varied market and physical conditions of neighborhoods surrounding the greenway highlight the need for community economic development tools to be deployed in targeted ways that achieve equitable outcomes based on each neighborhood's underlying conditions.

COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS	DEPLOYMENT APPROACH
GROWING MARKET <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population growth• High rents and land values• Significant recent deliveries & robust pipeline• Significant multi-family• Low homeownership rates	ACTIVATE & PROTECT Encourage new investment & protect existing residents & businesses
STABLE MARKET <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatively stable population• Adjacency to strong markets and• Major new infrastructure investments• Predominantly single family• Significant homeownership• Significant DLBA resources	STABILIZE & PREPARE Promote homeownership & prepare for future investment
CHALLENGED MARKET <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declining population• Low rents and land values• Limited recent deliveries• No planned construction	SUSTAIN & ENHANCE Improve quality of life through enhanced maintenance
INDUSTRIAL MARKET <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substantial industrial uses or potential• Limited residents or commercial uses• Significant vacant land	CULTIVATE & FUEL Grow industrial jobs of all types



BY THE NUMBERS

19% of residents 25 and older have less than a high school diploma or equivalent.

8.5% of people 16 or older in the labor force are unemployed.

The Phasing

Significant market studies were conducted to analyze what areas along the greenway were the most vulnerable and how to prioritize their needs.

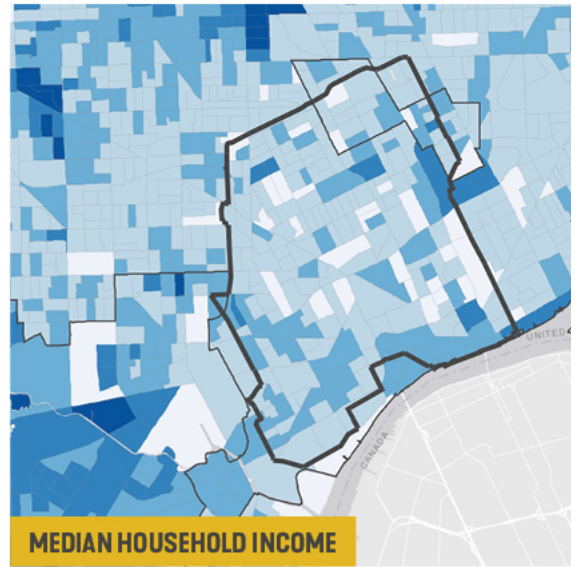
Image Credit: HR & A

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TARGETED INVESTMENT AREAS



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



POINTS OF INTEREST



JOB CENTERS

The Study

Data was collected that showed how each section of the greenway has operated in the past, and how it would benefit from the greenway in the future.

Image Credit: SmithGroup; Median Household Income Graphic: HR & A
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The Implementation

Aggressive implementation focuses on the hardest hit neighborhoods first, resulting in two miles completed in 2023 and estimated completion in 2027.

Image Credit: Construction Images: City of Detroit; Plan Images: SmithGroup; Logo: Studio Incognita
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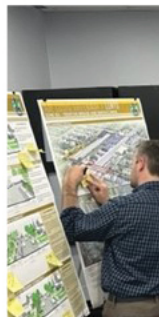
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PLANNING ST



ON-GOING EN



GREENWAY HERITAGE CONSERVANCY

TIREMAN-WARREN REZONING EFFORTS

Rezoning Proposal

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STANDING COMMITTEE

Petitioner: Greenway Heritage Conservancy & The Midwest Civic Council of Block Clubs Association

Co-Petitioner: City Planning Commission

The Midwest Neighborhood

Neighborhood Revitalization Framework Plan

August 2021

The Impact

Since the plan has been completed, the neighborhoods have received strategic planning funding, rezoning efforts, and created community organizations

Image Credit: Images: City of Detroit; Spirit of Detroit Image: Getty Images

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An interesting perspective and approach to the reconversion of space to improve communities, this well-thought-out plan truly advances diversity, equity, and inclusion. It offers a vision of on street and off-street connectivity. Detroit continues to be a city on the rise, a "comeback kid." Here is another excellent plan to address so many important issues. The Dequindre Cut has proven to be a successful greenway, and the Joe Louis Greenway would be equally successful. The dots are connected to enhance community and ecosystem health while celebrating Detroit's history, culture, and neighborhood identity.

- 2023 Awards Jury

Project Credits

Studio Incognita, Identity, Branding, Messaging, and Wayfinding

Sidewalk Detroit, Public Engagement and Arts & Culture

HR & A, Housing & Economic Development

Toole Design Group, Greenway Design

Brian Charlton, ASLA, SmithGroup Landscape Architect

Project Statement

The Joe Louis Greenway is a 27.5-mile planned non-motorized trail and linear park in Detroit that is reclaiming vacant industrial spaces to improve access to nature, play, and recreation for all Detroiters. The community-authored planning process-built trust through shared authorship. It celebrates the city's unique history, culture, and neighborhood identity, provides a safe recreation experience, promotes economic development, connects neighborhoods and people, and restores the natural environment. Creative and engaging activities made the process accessible to a diverse group of stakeholders and community members from across the city. When completed, 46,000 Detroiters will live within a 10-minute walk to the Joe Louis Greenway.

Project Narrative

This 27.5-mile loop greenway reutilizes vacant rail corridors that once serviced the city's automotive industry. These transportation systems that were once so critical to Detroit's economy are now scars of a former life. The Joe Louis Greenway (JLG) heals these wounds through a community-authored plan to transform this underutilized network, unite 23 distinct neighborhoods, and celebrate the powerful cultures and people of Detroit through design features, public art, signage, cultural destinations, and programming. Its name commemorates Detroit's Joe Louis as a tireless advocate for social and racial justice for Black Americans, putting the city's collective journey toward a more equitable future at the center of JLG's mission.

Using geospatial and data analytics combined with community input, the team established an understanding of existing economic conditions, demographics, connectivity, mobility, accessibility, open space, and cultural destinations, and adapted routing and design decisions accordingly. Design standards for cross-sections, intersections, and amenities apply and improve on best practices for non-motorized systems and have resulted in new standards for pedestrian safety across the city. Analysis of existing stormwater systems, environmental conditions, and legacy land uses led to extensive green infrastructure and re-naturalization within the greenway corridor. The JLG's planning and design reflects extensive community input and celebrates the cultures, histories, and lives of those living in the city. The JLG Framework Plan had significant impact well before breaking ground. The process brought community voices and perspectives to the table while fostering citizen advocacy. In partnership with the City, the planning team identified a working group of approximately 100 community leaders across the greenway impact area. The group tested innovative engagement activities, provided suggestions for larger meetings, and assisted with outreach to hard-to-reach populations. Overall, there were 17 planned events with over 600 attendees, with translators and fliers in Spanish, Arabic, and Bengali. City staff attended 44 additional community events to gather input. The planning process advanced critical dialogue on topics around equitable economic development such as job creation, ensuring benefits remain in the community, and preventing resident and business displacement. The resulting sense of community empowerment led to Midwest neighborhood members forming the nonprofit Greenway Heritage Conservancy to share information with residents about phase-one construction, and advocate for rezoning that will encourage more equitable small businesses and residential development. The City of Detroit, Joe Louis Greenway Partnership, and Detroit Riverfront Conservancy formed the Unified Greenway Partnership, and has already raised \$178 million of its goal of \$350 million for the completion and endowed maintenance of the JLG. The City of Detroit has also committed \$3 million annually for operations and maintenance. An inclusionary and regenerative philosophy guided every step of the planning process, including the prioritizing of improvements in areas of city that haven't seen significant public investment for decades. The first two miles will be completed in 2023 with another six miles completed in 2024. In his 2023 State of the City address, the Mayor of Detroit set ambitious targets for the completion of the full greenway by 2027.

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