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JOE LOUIS GREENWAY



from **A PLACE WITH NO NAME** |
establishing an urban identity
by Mikołaj Gomółka





A greenway is a strip of undeveloped land near an urban area, set aside for recreational use or environmental protection. This definition describes what the city of Detroit plans on doing with their 27.5 mile long undeveloped strip of land. Formally known as the Joe Louis Greenway, this recreational pathway is determined to unify Detroit's neighborhoods, people, and parks. The greenway is named after the late boxer, Joe Louis who got his start in Detroit in the 1930s and later became world heavyweight champion whilst breaking color barriers and bringing people together. It is an appropriate honor as that is what the Greenway will aim to do as well. The city of Detroit strives to honor Joe Louis by providing equitable spaces through arts, programming, and economic opportunities for all demographics. Being over just a marathon distance long, the greenway will have plenty of opportunities to connect parks and neighborhoods across the city, thus allowing

residents to travel safely and comfortably from McNichols to the riverfront through a combination of new trails, on-street protected bike lanes, and various links to existing trails like the Dequindre Cut and the RiverWalk. The ability of the greenway to include cities such as Dearborn, Hamtramck, and Highland Park and link them to larger trail systems the beginning construction of the joe that crisscross the entire state as well as pass-through five council districts makes the greenway special. According to the official Joe Louis Greenway website, detroitgreenways.org, Mayor Mike Duggan has committed \$20 million to build the first phase of the greenway, which spans 2.8 miles from greenway just off of joy road | photo:

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Warren Street to Fullerton Avenue, and is currently being constructed as seen in the image above. The schedule for this phase is to be completed in the early to mid 2023. An additional \$40 million has been pledged by the Wilson Foundation for regional trail construction, which includes the Joe Louis Greenway.

A trail, separated from traffic, suitable for walking, jogging, biking, and even skating, winding through various Detroit neighborhoods forming a nearly 30 mile long ring interlock communities with each other. Imagine infants in parks with their parents, groups of children playing together, the elderly taking a stroll just outside their home on a beautifully executed greenway—this is what planners of the Joe Louis Greenway envision. A vision that dates all the way back to 2007 the greenway is officially coming to fruition thanks to the initial lump sum by the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation that awarded \$2 million to the City of Detroit to develop a framework plan and construction drawings for the project in 2017. However, the concept of the greenway began with the Friends of the Inner Circle Greenway in 2007 and became part of the Detroit Greenway coalition Network Vision in 2009. Using other existing trails and plans, the Coalition modified the routing, advocated for its development, and worked closely with the city of Detroit. In 2017, Mayor Mike Duggan announced plans to rename the Inner Circle Greenway after legendary boxer and Detroiter, Joseph Louis Barrow, also known as Joe Louis. The City of Detroit announced in March of

2019 that the SmithGroup team was selected for the project. An advisory council has also been created, comprised of community members from each Detroit City Council Districts impacted by the route. It still remains under construction in certain areas while the city of Detroit is planning to finalize all design changes with the help of influence from the community by the end of 2022, but may get pushed back a few months further. As stated, community input was an important factor when the City of Detroit put together a framework plan for the process. A quote via Detroit Greenways Coalition states, "the greenway must reflect the needs and desires of the local communities through which it passes." The intent behind starting at this location for phase one is to combat the high vacancy neighborhoods and illegal dumping that occurs throughout the site. The objective is to provide businesses, development opportunities, build on strong community partnerships, and clean up these blight, contaminated areas. City planners see this as an opportunity to bring additional investment and attention to the neighborhoods in need. Based on the State of Michigan's website, michigan.gov, the City of Detroit is acquiring 7.5 miles of abandoned Conrail railroad property using grants from Michigan Michigan's Natural Resources Trust Fund and MDOT. This railroad property, formerly the Detroit Terminal Railroad will become the northern and western part of the Joe Louis Greenway loop, making this similar to the Dequindre Cut loop because of these 7.5 miles becoming a nonmotorized greenway. Not only is the goal to provide entertainment and amenities to all age ranges, but it also adds affordable mobility options to get to jobs, education, and transit. The Joe Louis Greenway will also help support neighborhood development and re-purpose vacant land, which this area so desperately needs.

The average cost per mile is expected to just under \$8 million

Although the overall construction of the entire greenway is stated to be completed in the next 5 to 10 years, the anticipation for the whole of the greenway to be complete and usable is higher than ever. Not only are residents of Detroit and nearby neighborhoods looking forward to freely using the recreational pathway, but the greater part of Metro Detroiters are just as excited to take a trip down to Detroit and take a joy ride while using the vast amenities provided along the greenway. When finished, the greenway will provide a place for people of all abilities to safely walk, bike, play, and run while connecting neighborhoods, parks, schools, jobs, historic sites, commercial corridors, and public transit. With community members playing a huge role in providing input on the goals of the greenway they identified six themes that would guide the vision of the Joe Louis Greenway. These themes include environmental sustainability, equitable growth, historical

and cultural significance, bike and pedestrian infrastructure safety, health and fitness, and connectivity combined with accessibility. The greenway has tremendous potential to enhance the urban environment, improving the accessibility in the City of Detroit making it more beautiful and enjoyable altogether.



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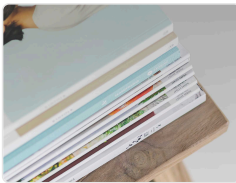
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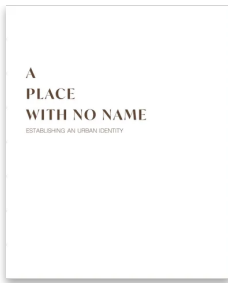


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