



For Immediate Release

*Editor's note, renderings can be found [here](#).

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy and William Davidson Foundation Announce New Sport House on the West Riverfront to be Named after William "Bill" Davidson

DETROIT (September 13, 2021) - The William Davidson Foundation and the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy announce that a new Sport House in the future 22-acre Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park on Detroit's West Riverfront will be named after the Detroit businessman and former professional sports team owner, William "Bill" Davidson (1922-2009). With this commitment to the Conservancy, the William Davidson Foundation has now granted more than \$11 million to the ongoing transformation of Detroit's international riverfront into a beautiful and accessible world-class gathering place for all.

The William Davidson Sport House will add to the public offerings on the Detroit Riverfront and features a raised canopy and skylight that provides two public open-air basketball courts and flexible space for a range of programs and events that will welcome visitors from all walks of life. Designed by award-winning Ghanaian-British architect Sir David Adjaye, who also designed the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the William Davidson Sport House is slated for completion in 2023. The Sport House will be part of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park, also named after a renowned professional sports team owner, businessman and philanthropist.

"We are honored that the William Davidson Foundation chose the Detroit Riverfront to be the recipient of its generosity, which will create a living memorial in honor of Bill Davidson and all that he made possible for youth and sports," said Matthew Cullen, chairman of the board for the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. "Their investment in the Sport House adds yet another chapter in the nearly 20 year transformational story of the riverfront, which is a community-wide story of partnerships."

"No project truly connects the region and plays a more central role in Detroit's resurgence than the revitalization of more than five miles of the Detroit Riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge to Belle Isle," said Darin McKeever, president and CEO of the William Davidson Foundation.

The Foundation considers the William Davidson Sport House a fitting tribute to its founder, as Mr. Davidson owned the Detroit Pistons, Detroit Shock and Tampa Bay Lightning pro sports franchises and is widely considered a visionary in bringing together sports, venues and the community. The naming of the Sport House will be celebrated this weekend, at the

Conservancy's "Shimmer on the River" fundraising event on Friday night and the West Riverfront Block Party on Saturday.

The leadership of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is grateful for the partnership of the William Davidson Foundation in making this new park a reality. The opening of the park will have a significant impact on the continued revitalization of the West Riverfront and the Sport House is sure to become an icon for the community.

"Kids who see the William Davidson Sport House will immediately recognize it as a place that was built for them," said Mark Wallace, president and CEO of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. "It will be a draw for youth from the city of Detroit and from the Southeast Michigan region. This park will be like no other park anywhere in the world, and it will contribute to an increased quality of life for generations of Detroiters."

The future Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is one of the most significant projects on the horizon for the Conservancy and a major step forward in completing its goal of developing 5.5 miles of revitalized riverfront. It will dramatically change the landscape along the downtown riverfront, and it is expected to significantly boost economic benefit in the area as well. The 22-acre park will feature a Water Wonderland, William Davidson Sport House with basketball courts, the Delta Dental Play Garden with an array of animal structures for kids to climb in and around and a large lawn that will be used for special events and programming.

Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates was selected to lead the park design team, with Sir David Adjaye of Adjaye Associates designing the Sport House and the Park House structures within the park.

The Detroit Riverfront attracts 3.5 million visitors annually and has remained open every day during the coronavirus pandemic. Since March 2020, use of the Detroit Riverwalk has increased 20 percent and Dequindre Cut usage has increased by 40 percent. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy has invested more than \$200 million in the revitalization of the Detroit Riverfront, which in turn has generated more than \$2 billion in public and private investment. The Detroit Riverwalk was recently named Best Riverwalk in the country by USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice Awards.

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About the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 with the mission to develop public access to Detroit's riverfront and serve as an anchor for economic development. As the permanent stewards of the Riverwalk and the Dequindre Cut, the Conservancy is responsible for raising the funds needed for construction, operation, maintenance, security and programming of the public spaces located along the riverfront. The ultimate vision is for the Conservancy to develop five-and-a-half miles of riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge on the west to Gabriel Richard Park, just east of the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle. Visit www.detroitriverfront.org for more information.

About William Davidson Foundation

The William Davidson Foundation is a private family foundation that honors its founder and continues his lifelong commitment to philanthropy, advancing for future generations the economic, cultural, and civic vitality of Southeast Michigan, the State of Israel, and the Jewish community. For more information, please visit williamdavidson.org.

About William “Bill” Davidson

Born and raised in Detroit, William “Bill” Davidson (1922 – 2009) was an American businessman and philanthropist who earned international acclaim for his business acumen and skilled corporate leadership. He served as President and CEO of Guardian Industries Corp., which he transformed from a small, struggling family company into one of the world’s largest manufacturers of architectural and automotive glass and exterior plastics for vehicles. He was an innovator, making each of his major plants a profit center responsible for its sales, marketing, production and supply chain development. At the time of his death, Guardian was doing business in over 150 countries and employed more than 19,000 workers.

Mr. Davidson was also the owner of several American professional sports teams: the Detroit Pistons of the National Basketball Association (NBA), the Detroit Shock of the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), and the Tampa Bay Lightning of the National Hockey League (NHL). The Detroit Pistons won the NBA World Championship three times during his ownership. In 2004 he became the only owner in U.S. professional sports history to have his teams win an NBA Championship, a Stanley Cup hockey championship, and the woman’s WNBA Championship in the same season. His sports honors included election to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and selection as an inaugural inductee into the Michigan Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

Mr. Davidson was one of Michigan’s most notable philanthropists, responsible for more than \$200 million in donations to local and international charities and universities in his lifetime. He made transformative philanthropic investments with trusted leaders and organizations, including those which led to the establishment of the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan, the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and the Davidson Visitors Center and Archeological Park in the Temple Wall area of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem. In 1997, the Council of Michigan Foundations honored Mr. Davidson for his lifelong philanthropic efforts locally, nationally, and internationally.