



**RALPH C.
WILSON, JR.**
CENTENNIAL PARK

Grand Opening!

Featuring **DETROIT HARVEST FEST**
OCTOBER 25 & 26, 2025



Issue 28 / Q3 / 2025



A MESSAGE FROM KAREN SLAUGHTER DUPERRY

As we prepare to start a new chapter on the Detroit Riverfront with the opening of Ralph Wilson Park this fall, I've been reflecting on what it has taken to get us here. Building a park of this scale is never just about design and construction, it's about people. It's about neighbors who share their ideas, families who dream together about what a park can be, partners who support us in ways big and small, and communities who give their time and energy to ensure this space truly belongs to everyone.

For nearly eight of my 23 total years with the Conservancy, I have had the privilege of working alongside so many of you to bring Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park to life. From the very beginning, this project has been shaped by the voices of Detroiters. We did not just design a park. We listened, we learned, and we built together.

Hundreds of touchpoints like community meetings, neighborhood gatherings, school visits, walking tours, Zoom calls, and one-on-one conversations guided every step of this journey. From the beginning, the

Community Advisory Team (CAT) played a vital role in making sure the park reflects the hopes and needs of Detroiters from every corner of the city. Students shared their dreams for play spaces, families envisioned places for gathering, and residents reminded us of the importance of beauty, safety, and welcoming environments.

On October 25 and 26, we will officially open the gates to more than 22 acres of green space, play, sport, and joy... and EVERYONE is invited.

But the grand opening is not the finish line. It's the beginning of countless memories, connections, and experiences this park will bring to the community for generations to come.

I am deeply grateful to the team members, partner organizations and neighbors who poured their time, passion, and creativity into this park. Together, we have created something extraordinary: a riverfront park imagined by Detroiters, for Detroiters.

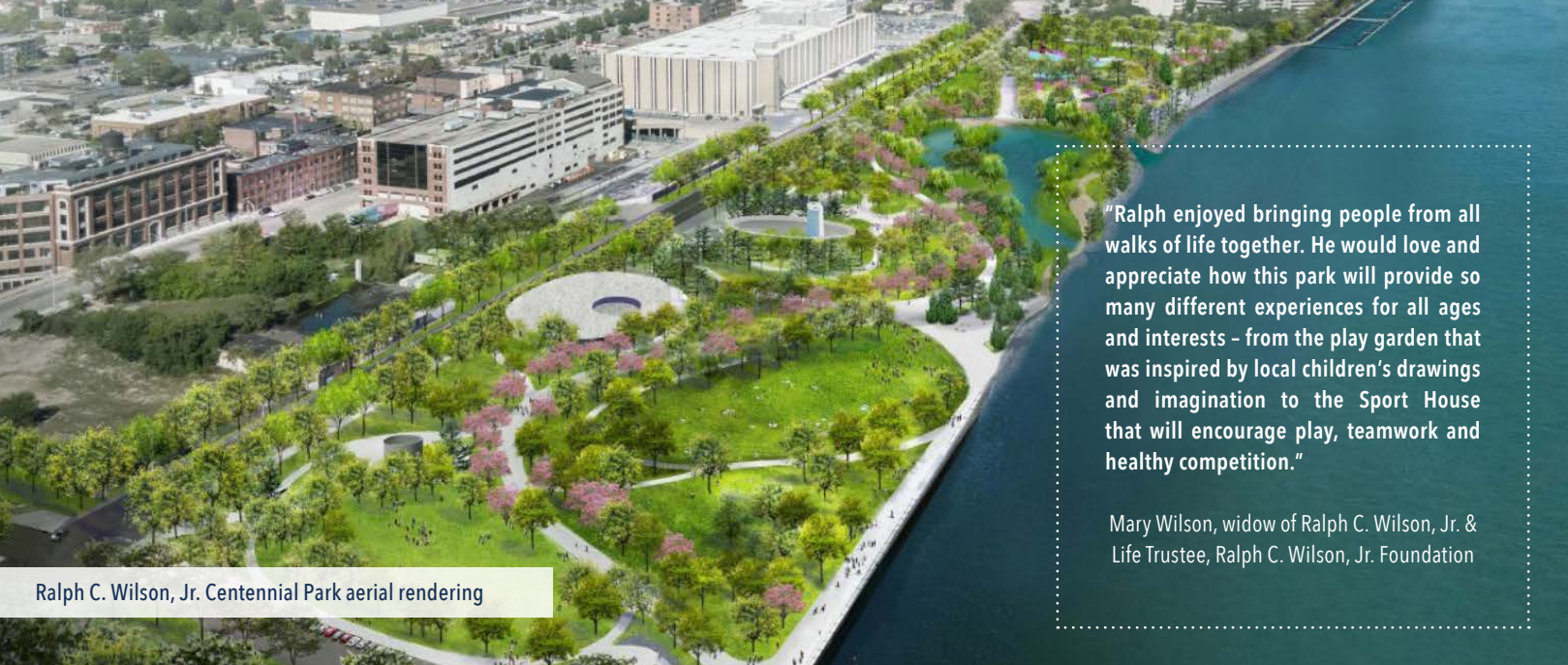
I cannot wait to celebrate this new chapter with you.

With gratitude and excitement,

Karen Slaughter DuPerry
Executive in Charge of Construction



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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park aerial rendering

"Ralph enjoyed bringing people from all walks of life together. He would love and appreciate how this park will provide so many different experiences for all ages and interests – from the play garden that was inspired by local children's drawings and imagination to the Sport House that will encourage play, teamwork and healthy competition."

Mary Wilson, widow of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. & Life Trustee, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation



West Riverfront Park, 2018



Construction progress, May 2024



Construction progress, August 2025

BECOMING RALPH C. WILSON, JR. CENTENNIAL PARK

In early 2017, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy set out to revitalize West Riverfront Park into a one-of-a-kind public space. Driven by a commitment to align the design of the park with the needs of local residents, the Conservancy formed the Community Advisory Team (CAT), a group of Detroiters deeply in touch with their own neighborhoods. This dedicated group of community members traveled the country to draw inspiration and lessons from dynamic public spaces found in other major metropolitan areas. In addition to the insight gained from CAT members, the Conservancy hosted several Community Meetings around the city to raise awareness of the project and receive valuable feedback. The community experiences that have informed the development of the park also include the perspectives of Detroit area youth who played a critical role: designing the Fox and Bird playscapes found in the park. These playscapes began as clay figures created by elementary school students at workshops conducted by Monstrum, a design company based in Denmark. From these original clay conceptions came renderings, and eventually the construction of these unique, community-designed creatures.

To determine the best team to make Detroit's vision for this park a reality, the Conservancy launched an international design competition, and final

presentations took place in early 2018. In April of 2018, the team from Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates was selected to lead the project. A few months later in October, to celebrate Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s 100th birthday, West Riverfront Park was officially renamed "Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park" as part of a \$100 million investment in parks and trails in Southeast Michigan.

In 2022, ground officially broke on the site of the future park. After three years of environmental repair, construction, and landscaping, the park will open to the public on October 25, 2025.

"Parks and public spaces are huge drivers of quality of life and central to the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's mission. Supporting a project of this magnitude, shaped by Detroiters' vision, was a fitting way to honor Mr. Wilson's legacy. This park reflects both his deep pride in his hometown of Detroit and the community's passion for creating a transformational space."

Dave Egner, President & CEO, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

PROJECT TIMELINE



Rhonda Collins & Karen Slaughter DuPerry, construction team, at the 2022 Groundbreaking Event



First willow tree planted at Ralph Wilson Park, 2024



Bird clay model student concept



Fox clay model student concept



Bird & Fox rendering



Completed Bird & Fox



ABOUT RALPH

Detroit native Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. (1918–2014) was an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and the founder and longtime owner of the Buffalo Bills NFL team.

Remembered for his generosity and commitment to community, he was dedicated to improving quality of life in his hometown of Detroit and in Buffalo, New York through the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

Get to know Ralph Wilson Park

DELTA DENTAL PLAY GARDEN

The **Delta Dental Play Garden** is the ultimate destination for play in Southeast Michigan. This one-of-a-kind playground invites young visitors to explore in unforgettable ways, with giant slides, climbing towers, swings and more.

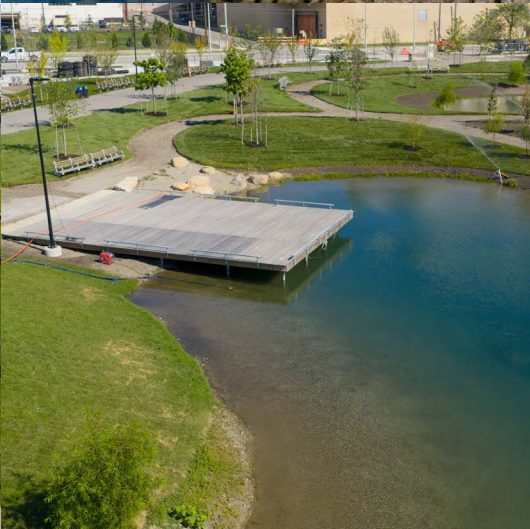
Playscapes found around the Play Garden, including those at the **Henry Ford Health Tot Lot**, feature animals native to Michigan. Children can trek through **Bernstein Bear's Woodland** to take a journey down the twenty-foot-tall slide, or they can discover the power of the Detroit River in the uniquely interactive **Gilbert Family Foundation Water Wonderland**. More slide adventures await at the **Charles & Sarah McClure Slide Bay**, filled with towers, treehouses and other climbing attractions. The **Delta Dental Play Garden** is sure to provide priceless childhood memories and adventures for generations of Detroiters to come.



"Building community, building trust and building memories are what the Delta Dental Play Garden represents to us. Those things don't happen with billboards in the sky. They happen with boots on the ground. We look forward to supporting healthy activities all year round in this safe, inclusive and fun space."

Margaret Trimer, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, Delta Dental of Michigan





Get to know Ralph Wilson Park

HURON-CLINTON METROPARKS WATER GARDEN

The 2.5-acre **Huron-Clinton Metroparks Water Garden** will allow visitors to experience water from the Detroit River through engaging educational programming, calming walking paths, and relaxing areas to unwind. The Water Garden is the first ever Metropark in the city of Detroit and offers a range of opportunities for learning including water testing experiments and lessons on the habitat of the river. A large dock and tranquil bridge are key features of the Water Garden, providing more opportunities for relaxation close to the water. Through these experiences, visitors of all ages will develop a strong sense of connection to the Detroit River and the greater local environment, fostering stewardship of these beloved natural spaces.



"We are so excited to start welcoming existing and new audiences to our first-ever Metropark within the City of Detroit, where community members can engage with us daily. We are grateful for this strong partnership with the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy that is helping us realize progress toward our goal of having a physical presence within the City of Detroit."

Amy McMillan, Chief Executive Officer,
Huron-Clinton Metroparks

Get to know *Ralph Wilson Park*

WILLIAM DAVIDSON SPORT HOUSE

The **William Davidson Sport House** is a striking open-air pavilion and signature feature of Ralph Wilson Park that will serve as a vibrant, multi-use hub for recreation and community gatherings.

The structure houses two **Detroit Pistons** full-size basketball courts under a large skylight in a weather-protected space. More than just a place to play, the Sport House is envisioned as a year-round gathering spot where people of all ages can connect, be active, and enjoy the riverfront. Whether it's a neighborhood tournament, youth programming, or a casual pickup game, the Sport House is sure to become a favorite destination for Detroiters along the riverfront.



"The opening of the William Davidson Sport House at Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is a milestone for the Detroit Riverfront. This state-of-the-art facility will be a hub for recreation, competition, and connection, reflecting Mr. Davidson's lifelong commitment to his hometown and honoring his legacy by uniting people of all ages through the power of sport."

Darin McKeever, President & CEO,
William Davidson Foundation



CONTRACTOR CORNER

The transformation of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park would not have been possible without the dedication of the site team, contractors, and crew members who showed up day after day throughout construction. Their hard work, expertise, and commitment turned vision into reality, and we are grateful for the countless hours they invested in bringing this park to life. Special thank you to our site team leads:

Brinker Christman Joint Venture Site Team
Dillon, Jason, Manny, Matt, Mike, Sam

JLL Construction Management Team
Almir, Rhonda

Detroit Riverfront Conservancy
Executive in Charge of Construction
Karen



Get to know Ralph Wilson Park

DTE FOUNDATION SUMMIT

The **DTE Foundation Summit** at Ralph Wilson Park is an expansive new gathering place along the Detroit Riverfront, offering sweeping views of the Detroit River, the Ambassador and Gordie Howe bridges, and the city skyline. The large grassy area, accented with gentle hills, winding pathways and comfortable benches, is designed to provide a space for both relaxation and activity.

Whether enjoying a picnic, taking a leisurely stroll or relaxing on a bench watching the river flow by, the DTE Foundation Summit provides park visitors with a more tranquil space to spend time in the park.

The Summit will also provide a place for year-round events hosted by the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, like movie nights in the park, live concerts and countless other opportunities for large community gatherings.



"We're proud to support the transformation of Detroit's riverfront, and Ralph Wilson Park is a powerful example of what happens when vision, collaboration and community come together. We're excited to be part of this moment and look forward to the impact this space will have for generations to come."

Rodney Cole, President,
DTE Foundation

RALPH C. WILSON, JR. CENTENNIAL PARK

Grand Opening!

Featuring **DETROIT HARVEST FEST**

OCTOBER 25 & 26 | 11AM-8PM

Join us 10am Saturday for the Press Conference & Ribbon Cutting

A HISTORIC GRAND OPENING EVENT

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is thrilled to announce the Grand Opening of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The community is invited to join the celebration October 25 & 26 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., beginning with a commemorative press conference and ribbon cutting at 10 a.m. on Saturday. To mark this historic occasion, Detroit Harvest Fest will move to Wilson Park in 2025, offering free admission to all guests.

Guests can enjoy hayrides, wander through the riverfront pumpkin patch, trick-or-treat, and create family-friendly crafts. The newly

repared Jefferson Avenue will host over 30 local food trucks, while other seasonal food and beverage options will be found around the park, including a coffee house and cider & donut stands. The weekend will be full of opportunities to be active including hustle, Zumba, yoga, and a 3x3 youth basketball tournament. The weekend will also highlight local and national talent with live performances in celebration of this incredible new public space.

Be part of Detroit history and experience this dynamic new park during two unforgettable days of celebration!



Learn more by visiting
[DetroitRiverfront.org/WilsonParkGrandOpening](https://detroitriverfront.org/WilsonParkGrandOpening)



THANK YOU TO OUR GRAND OPENING SPONSORS

Presented by
 RALPH C. WILSON, JR. FOUNDATION

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Join us in supporting the Wilson Park Grand Opening and help us create an unforgettable experience for everyone

Make a donation or join as a sponsor by visiting
[DetroitRiverfront.org/WilsonParkOpeningSponsorships](https://detroitriverfront.org/WilsonParkOpeningSponsorships)





THANK YOU TO OUR WILSON PARK SUPPORTERS

Throughout Ralph Wilson Park, you'll find unique areas that carry the names of generous partners and sponsors. Their contributions helped make the construction of this park possible, and each named space stands as a tribute to their commitment to the Detroit Riverfront and entire community.

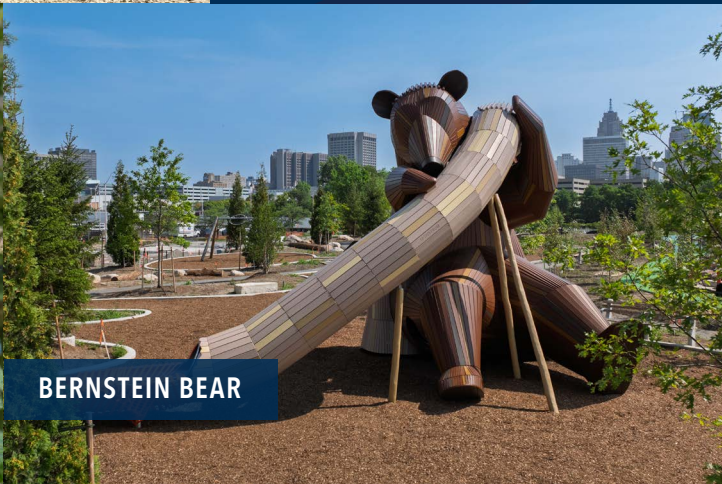


PROGRAMMING AT THE PARK

From high-energy Zumba classes in the Sport House to moments of mindfulness along the Peninsula, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will serve as a hub of activity to build rich social connection and a strong sense of ownership of this new community space. In addition to favorite riverfront pastimes like biking, running, and walking, Wilson Park will be the scene for pickup basketball games, family movie nights, and large-scale musical performances. The Conservancy is looking forward to presenting these events in collaboration with many Detroit-based organizations and partners.

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's partnership with the Huron-Clinton Metroparks will grow through a variety of educational programming opportunities for all-ages, including field trip programs, pop-up programming at the Water Garden, and adult-learning workshops. In addition to these direct engagements with educational opportunities, visitors can interact with the new space through a Girl Scout badge uniquely adapted to Wilson Park and an accessible field trip curriculum that allows teachers to lead experiences for their students. The Conservancy will also continue to expand stewardship programs and workforce development centered around green careers in partnership with local youth organizations.

The thoughtful programming of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will be guided by four interpretive themes: **Power of the Outdoors, Four Seasons of Play, Connecting with the Environment, and Lessons from the River and Land.** Intentional design of the park space also creates the ability for parkgoers to interact with the space without active programming. The entire community is invited to experience the special programs offered at Wilson Park, and to create individualized experiences to make the space their own.



WAYS TO GIVE

Considering a gift to the Detroit Riverfront?
Learn more by visiting
[DetroitRiverfront.org/give](https://detroitriverfront.org/give)





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