Design and installation: Mariani Landscape, Lake Bluff, Illinois

Washington 24 Planter with Square Base, LS 9342 on Washington 24 Pedestal Cap, LS 9222

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Greetings fellow landscape architects! Winter is almost here, how did that happen already? It seems that the design and construction industry were in full swing this summer. I hope that things are to the point you may be able to catch your breath, I know I’m looking forward to a less hectic winter season.

We’ve had a busy summer. There were a series of bills introduced to the Michigan Legislature this year that would de-license Landscape Architects. The chapter and I sent out a series of letters describing these efforts early this summer. If you haven’t heard about this check out our website under the MiASLA Licensure tab. Our Executive Director/Lobbyist, Government Affairs team, and ExCom have been working diligently to not allow this to happen. We feel like this attempt to de-license Landscape Architecture in Michigan will not move forward. However, you never know what will happen so keep your eyes and ears open for updates from the Chapter.

As part of our attempt to educate Legislators on Landscape Architecture we encouraged our members to meet with your legislators at their coffee hours or other events. Most legislators and members of the general public don’t know what a Landscape Architect is, so educating them about our profession and putting a face with the profession is important. ASLA has some great tools to educate others about our profession through their Advocacy page. If you have any questions about Advocacy of our profession please contact me.

As you may have noticed, our MiSITES issues are a little delayed this year. We are currently working to get a new editor and other volunteers in place for the publication so we can keep coming out with quality content at a regular interval. We are committed to getting all of the issues out this year.

Speaking of volunteers, as the winter comes around we are looking for a number of volunteers for our various committees. These include the Annual Meeting, Golf Outing, Social Events, Fellows, Portfolio Review, Chapter Awards, MISITES, Social Media, and Legislative Site Visits. As you know Michigan ASLA is run by our members. The ExCom can’t do it all. The level of involvement can be as much or as little as you have time for. If you are interested in any of these opportunities please email Membership@michiganasla.org

I hope you enjoy this great issue of MISITES and as always, if you have any questions please don’t hesitate to contact me. ■

Ben Baker, PLA, ASLA
President, Michigan Chapter of ASLA
In 2014, the City of Detroit reported having over 84,000 parcels defined as “blighted properties” in a survey completed by the Detroit Blight Removal Task Force. One of the hardest hit neighborhoods, Oakwood Heights, which lies between some of the heaviest industry in Michigan and our nation’s largest waste water treatment plant, had been in decline for over a generation. Hundreds of residential lots laid abandoned, burned out or in ruins rendering most home-sites uninhabitable. To remedy the situation, Marathon Petroleum Company LP (MPC) initiated a property purchase program to acquire properties from those willing to sell, with the intent of repurposing the land. In many cases, proceeds from property sales allowed neighborhood residents to upgrade their living conditions. Over 80% of the properties were purchased.

MPC is redeveloping Oakwood Heights as buffering greenspace, recognizing that quality greenspace can be a significant environmental, social and economic enhancement for the City of Detroit and the region. Following each property purchase, the residential structures were removed, and the grounds were restored to lawn. Greening of Detroit, a local non-profit, assisted MPC with this work and provides ongoing maintenance.

PEA was engaged to assist MPC in developing a multifunctional vision for the greenspace to accomplish the following goals:

- Community Engagement – Participate with community-led, green initiatives, and provide opportunity for area residents to participate with the greenspace development.
- Environmental Enhancement – Develop strategies that provide healthy, environmental benefits for the lower Rouge River corridor.
- Area Revitalization – Complete low impact land development initiatives that aesthetically and economically enhance the community.
Objectives to accomplish these goals became the primary program elements for site development, which include:

- Wildlife Enhancement
- Natural Resource-based Recreation
- Urban Agriculture
- Eco-industry-based Tourism

“The planning process provided MPC an opportunity to collaborate with community leaders and stakeholders regarding large scale environmental enhancements well beyond the project boundary.” – Treva Formby, Environmental Professional at MPC.

**Vision Plan:** The long-range vision for the 100-acre greenspace, now referred to as Marathon Gardens, calls for nearly 20 acres of wildlife habitat restoration directly connected to the Rouge River. This regional blue-green infrastructure corridor, formerly perceived to be untouchable due to its polluted condition, now supports a wide diversity of wildlife. Over the past three years, MPC staff teamed with neighborhood volunteers, Greening of Detroit, Kevin’s All-Season Landscaping and Michigan Wildflower Farm to plant over 3 acres of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Additional habitat amenities, include bat boxes, a snake hibernaculum and turtle nesting area.

Urban Farming is planned for the central area of the site abutting an existing retail corridor and area that remains somewhat populated. These adjacencies take advantage of potential farm product outlets...
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ABOVE: Fort Street Bridge Park conceptual plan.
Images courtesy of PEA Inc.
such as the Ram Produce Distribution Center and Giovanni’s Restaurant while facilitating easy travel for local residents to operate the farm facilities. A one-acre pilot farm project was initiated by Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision in 2015 and continues to expand every summer using reclaimed General Motors Volt shipping containers for raised beds.

Over 12 acres of park-like landscape re-define the site’s perimeter, creating a new “sense of place” characterized as “green”. Native shade and coniferous trees are used for aesthetic enhancement of surrounding roadways and the Iron Belle Trail – a cross-state non-motorized route from Ironwood to Belle Isle. Along the riverfront, MPC is participating with the Fort-Rouge Gateway Partnership (FRoG) to develop immediate and long range, recreation and tourism opportunities.

**Fort Street Bridge Park:** FRoG is planning a small park on the riverfront at the foot of a new bridge constructed by MDOT. This diverse stakeholder coalition led by Paul Draus, a sociology professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, conducts monthly meetings attended by City of Dearborn and Detroit officials, numerous local non-profit groups, interested individuals, students, MDOT, MDNR, MPC, other neighboring industries and PEA. According to Professor Draus, “This is an innovative, collaborative effort to engage community, reimagine landscape, and improve quality of life along the lower Rouge River in an area sometimes disparagingly referred to as “Michigan’s most polluted ZIP code.”

The park will serve as a rest stop along the Iron Belle Trail and provide interpretation of the former bridge’s history including the 1932 Hunger March, when five people were killed in an attempt to negotiate better working conditions at the Ford Rouge Plant. Features within the park include: a gathering plaza constructed of porous pavement, an interactive stormwater management demonstration, habitat enhancement, boardwalk along the river and a universally designed kayak/canoe launch. Giant sprockets from the historic bascule bridge were salvaged for incorporation into a sculptural centerpiece, and metal work from the former bridge will be repurposed to support interpretive display panels.

**Green Infrastructure – Urban Connective Tissue:** The layering of program elements at Marathon Gardens demonstrates how degraded residential areas can be transitioned into purposeful, multifunctional landscapes where there is likely no hope for a rebound of residential development. This model makes use of the Food | Water | Energy relationship to sustain its preservation, while enhancing a new walkable passageway that connects Detroit to downriver communities – a missing link in the formula for socioeconomic success for this region.

The forest filters particulate matter from neighboring industries via westerly breezes. The prairie habitat is envisioned to host pollinators and solar voltaic panels to enhance fertilization, provide electrical service and catch rain for urban farming. Rain lost between the panels is filtered through prairie and wetland soils before reaching the Rouge River.

In addition to providing wildlife habitat, this landscape reconnects communities and offers educational and recreational opportunities, while enhancing local businesses and quality of life for nearby residents. This greenspace reconnects people to fresh food and how it is produced in addition to natural systems – most notably.... the Rouge River.

**RIGHT: Solar field, green infrastructure, and prairie installation. Image courtesy of PEA Inc.**
“This is the greatest green project I have seen for southwest Detroit and area.” – Ilona Varga, Wayne County Commissioner.

For more information contact:
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LA RIDE - DETROIT

By Bob Ford, ASLA
LAP Inc.

On September 27th, 2017, over 70 landscape architects, designers, students, industry professionals, educators, and local citizens embarked on the third installation of the Landscape Architecture Ride (LA Ride) in Detroit, MI.

The LA Ride is an interactive bicycle ride where participants pedal to prominent places designed by, or influenced by, landscape architects. At each destination on the tour the riders get to meet the designers involved with the creation of the space, and learn how the project was brought to life. The LA Ride is open to not just professionals, or those in the landscape architecture industry, but anyone who wants to get outside and learn more about their favorite outdoor places, and rub elbows with the professionals who helped make those places a reality. The LA Ride is advocacy for our profession, a celebration of why landscape architecture so critical to our urban infrastructure, and ‘Education in Motion’.

Are you ready? Let’s ride!
The Route: 16 Total Miles
1. Rivard Plaza (START) → Campus Martius 1.00 miles
2. Campus Martius → Lafayette Greens 0.22 miles
3. Lafayette Greens → Beacon Park 0.74 miles
4. Beacon Park → Little Caesars Arena 0.50 miles
5. Little Caesars Arena → Eastern Market 1.47 miles
6. Eastern Market → Dequindre Cut 0.17 miles
7. Dequindre Cut → Scott Fountain 3.72 miles
8. Scott Fountain → Lake Okonoka 3.00 miles
9. Lake Okonoka → Chene Park 4.44 miles
10. Chene Park → Rivard Plaza (FINISH) 0.63 miles

The Detroit LA Ride kicked-off at Rivard Plaza. The skies cleared and sun came out to transform the river from gray to sparkling blue and white. The week long heat wave snapped and the temperature was a perfect 75 degrees. No humidity, no wind. Instructions were given from the ride organizers and we were off. We wound our way through the bustling downtown, past the Ren Center and the Spirit of Detroit to the Lafayette Greens, our first lecture stop.
We ride on to Beacon Park, the new Little Caesar’s Arena, past Eastern Market through the amazing Dequindre Cut, crossing Jefferson Avenue to Belle Isle. All along the way, our new friends, Arinett Ross and Henry Ford II (leaders of the Slow Roll SQUAD) keep us safe; confident and on course, “corking” intersections with whistles, bikes and bodies. With blind trust, we follow, cutting a wide swath left; up Cass Corridor; almost seventy riders, amazed and enjoying the camaraderie of strangers who will become friends out of this shared experience. The SQUAD stopping traffic, teaching us how to share the road with trolley cars, big trucks, taxis and pedestrians. Teaching motorists how to share the road with cyclists.
LA Rider rockin' their swag. Image courtesy of Pete Bosheff.

LA Ride stop at Beacon Park. Image courtesy of Wes Landon.

LA Ride stop at Little Caesars Arena. Image courtesy of Wes Landon.
Riding along the Dequindre Cut. Image courtesy of Pete Bosheff.
One unforgettable day out of a bygone era gliding into a future for Detroit unimaginable just a few years ago. Motorists give way, smile and wave. At every stop, the historical narrative presented by the Landscape Architects, who created these amazing places, connects the past to the present.

The Detroit LA Ride took a lot of coordination and planning to pull off, and we wouldn’t have been able to do it without all of our hardworking volunteers and generous event sponsors. A special thanks goes out to the LAP+Creative Team, Street Level, Slow Roll, the Detroit Creative Corridor Center (DC3), the Detroit Greenways Coalition, the Lansing Bike Party, our many generous sponsors, the Ride speakers, and the Michigan ASLA Annual Meeting Committee for making this event happen.

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