

SUMMARY

The Grand Circus Park Conservancy and Downtown Detroit Partnership have spent the last two years developing a new master plan for Grand Circus Park in the Grand Circus Historic District. Jeff Klein and Maria Galarza of the City of Detroit General Services Department – Parks and Recreation Division have been involved with the entire design process. The team has engaged Smithgroup for the project and has had three stakeholder and two public engagement meetings between September 2021 and September 2022 in order to develop a plan for the future of the park. Enough money has been raised in order to implement Phase 1 of the Master Plan. The project team reviewed the plan with HDC staff in November 2022 and is now seeking the Historic District Commission approval of the Master Plan and Phase 1 work.

HISTORY OF THE PARK

The park has been in use as a public space since 1807 when executed as part of Judge Augustus Woodward's plan for Detroit. Initially an informal public ground, in 1843-44 it became an official city park and the city authorized funds to be spent regrading and planting trees. By the late 1860s the park was used for as a public space for concerts, meetings, and other public events. The park continued to evolve, the Mayor Hazen Pingree statue on the west side of the park was erected in 1904, the Mayor William Cotter Maybury Monument on the east side was constructed in 1912. The east side Alger fountain was added in 1921, and the west side Edison Memorial fountain was constructed in 1929.

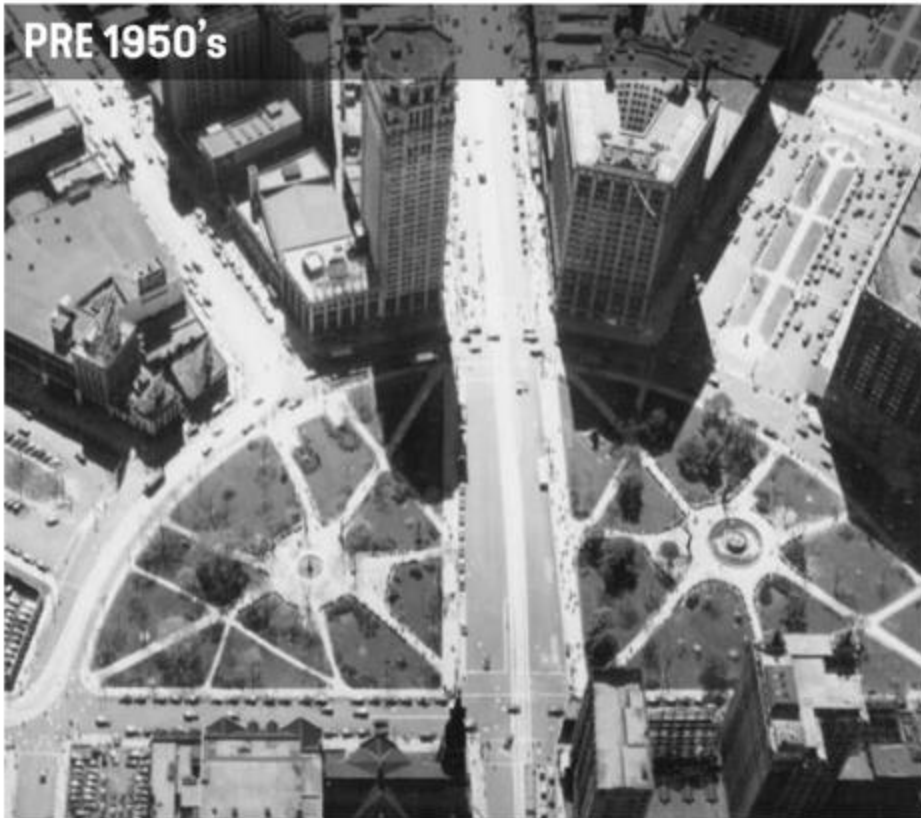


1915



1942





In 1957 the entire park was removed in order to construct the underground parking garage. Once the garage was complete the park was reconstructed and the parking garage ramps, stair and elevator access buildings were added. The park reconstruction retained the spatial organization of the central fountains and pathways radiating to the corners. Since the 1958-59 reconstruction the park has been further altered, including moving the Pingree and Maybury statues, and the addition of the Millennium Bell in 1999.



Looking east, circa 1957



Looking west, c. 1957



West half of the park after reconstruction, 1959



Looking southeast after reconstruction, 1959

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES OF THE PARK

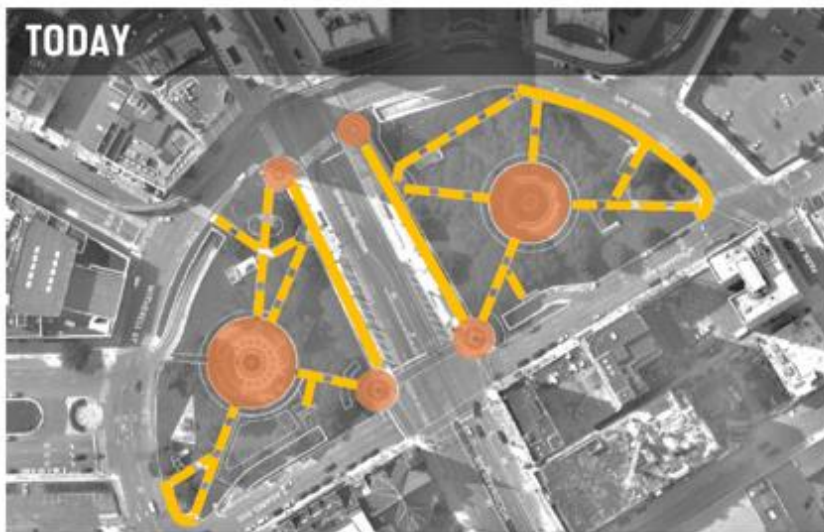
The two fountains, including their central location are important focal points of the park.

The radiating walkways as a spatial concept, but not the walkway exact locations or materials. The walkways have moved a number of times, the sidewalks originally around the perimeter of the park were partially removed in the 1959 reconstruction.

The two mayoral statues, but NOT their locations, are important elements. The movement of statuary within a park is generally part of the natural progression of a city park over its evolution. The statues were added in 1904 and 1912, were moved at least once about 1989 to their present locations. In the 1959 photo the Maybury statue is on the west side of the park and it is presently on the east side.

The trees, grass, and other landscaping are from the 1959 reconstruction or later and are NOT contributing elements to the park.

NEW MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



Three concepts were presented to the public and stakeholders for feedback. Concept 3, Pathways achieved the most goals of the end users. This option restores the pathway network of the park before 1959.

CONCEPT 1 - BUTTERFLY <small>Please click or touch comments with sticky notes on below map.</small> ● Love it ● I don't like it ● I don't know	CONCEPT 2 - CENTRAL GREEN <small>Please click or touch comments with sticky notes on below map.</small> ● Love it ● I don't like it ● I don't know	CONCEPT 3 - PATHWAYS <small>Please click or touch comments with sticky notes on below map.</small> ● Love it ● I don't like it ● I don't know

The proposed Master Plan includes the following changes, three of which are proposed for the first implementation phase:

- PHASE 1 - A landscaped median in Woodward Avenue to better and more safely connect the two halves and provide traffic calming – the obelisks currently at the southeast corner of the west half and southwest corner of the east half are proposed to be relocated into the Woodward median.
- PHASE 1 – Adding a sidewalk and street landscaping along both sides of Woodward, this will necessitate expanding into the street, bringing the park closer to its historic size
- PHASE 1 - Moving the mayoral monuments slightly back further from Woodward and surrounding them with planting beds instead of concrete sidewalk which will better protect the statues
- PHASE 1 - Constructing a food and beverage café on the east side, the exact materials and design to be determined but it will be one-story tall and designed to blend in with the park
- Retaining the central fountains
- Retaining and enhancing the walkways radiating from the centers to better connect them to the corners
- Adding sidewalk and street landscaping to the outer perimeters of both halves, this will necessitate going into the street, bringing the park back closer to its original size
- Creating a civic plaza around the west fountain
- Creating a smaller more intimate plaza around the east fountain
- Creating outdoor “rooms” with the use of grass, trees, and other landscaping
- Re-grading the pathways and lawns in the east half to be barrier free
- Retaining mature trees throughout the park

See attached plans for graphics explaining the above. Specific materials and designs for future phases can be brought back for review by the Commission or staff when they are decided.

REQUEST OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

It is requested that the Historic District Commission approve the overall master plan and authorize staff to give final approval of construction drawings of phases as they are implemented.

The master plan meets *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*. The proposed master plan preserves the historic features and characteristics of the park. The proposed changing of walkway locations, the addition of a perimeter walkway, and reconfiguring the plazas around the fountains retain the historic spatial organization of the park. The addition of the food and beverage café and the Woodward median are compatible with the park. Moving the mayor statues slightly and placing them in a landscaped bed is compatible with the historic character of the park. The re-grading of the landscaping to accommodate universal access and creation of outdoor “rooms” using trees and landscaping are compatible with the historic appearance of the park.

EXISTING PARK PHOTOS – provided by SmithGroup



Looking southwest from northeast corner of east side



Looking south from northwest corner of east side, Maybury monument proposed to move to left



Looking northeast from southwest corner of east side, location of future cafe building



Looking northwest from southeast corner of east side, note lack of sidewalk



Detail of existing plaza around fountain, east side, looking east, plaza proposed for reconfiguration



Looking southeast from northwest corner of west side



Looking east from west edge of west side



Looking north at south edge of west side, note how perimeter sidewalk ends



Looking north from southeast corner of west side, note lack of perimeter sidewalk



Looking west from Woodward at west side fountain



Looking south from northeast corner of west side, Pingree monument proposed to move to right

PARK MASTER PLAN

- The master plan creates direct physical and visual connections across the park
- Park edges are buffered by street landscaping
- Open spaces are improved for events and programming
- Diversity of outdoor spaces allow for very daily experience
- Traffic is calmed by a new median in Woodward Ave, road diet in Adams, widening crosswalks, and street trees



GRAND CIRCUS PARK MASTER PLAN

SMITHGROUP

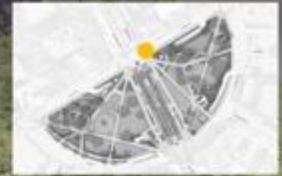
VIEW SOUTH EAST

PARK IS UNIFIED BY A NEW MEDIAN AND REDUCED ROAD WIDTHS IN WOODWARD AVENUE



VIEW SOUTHWEST

CORNERS ARE WELCOMING, WITH WOODWARD MEDIAN AND WIDE CROSSINGS

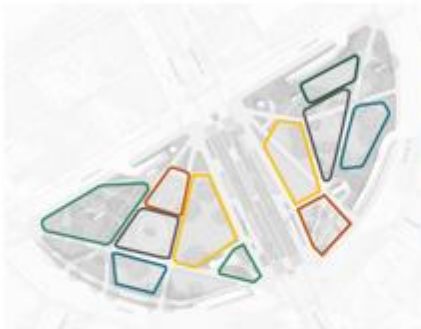


VIEW SOUTHWEST

PATHS LEAD TO SURROUNDING DESTINATIONS AND FORM THE EDGES OF USABLE SPACES



DAILY EXPERIENCES



VIEW NORTHEAST

A CAFÉ SERVES AS THE FRONT PORCH, EXTENDING VIBRANCY TO THE PARK'S EDGES



16

VIEW WEST

LAWNS ARE LIFTED UP TO PROVIDE FLAT, USABLE, CONNECTED SPACES



17

VIEW NORTHEAST

PEDESTRIAN GATEWAYS ALONG PERIMETER PATH



18

VIEW SOUTHEAST

WALKABLE, BUFFERED STREET EDGE



VIEW SOUTH

FLEXIBLE LAWNS AND OPEN SPACES FOSTER COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING



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SMITHGROUP

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