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## DETROIT

# Mayor Duggan, dignitaries celebrate Southwest Greenway pedestrian pathway opening



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Several public officials and project partners officially celebrated the opening of the non-motorized Southwest Greenway on Wednesday stretching away from Detroit's evolving riverfront.

Mayor Mike Duggan, alongside Detroit Riverfront Conservancy Chairman Matt Cullen and several dignitaries, kicked off the grand opening in a community event with hundreds of attendees at the entrance of the pedestrian pathway. The greenway connects to the riverfront and several landmarks in the city.

"It would be probably fair to say that we were the worst riverfront in the United States 20 years ago," Cullen said. Now, we were voted the No. 1 riverfront in the United States three years in a row."

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Beautified recreation in southwest Detroit did not exist, nor was it "even a dream," Duggan said.

"This is history," Duggan said. "For more than 100 years, the people of southwest Detroit experienced the riverfront negatively. If you talk to somebody from southwest Detroit about the riverfront, what did they think about? It is noise. It is odors. It is traffic. You never talked about southwest to talk about the riverfront."

City Council President Mary Sheffield said for the 10 years she has served on council, residents have yearned for equitable access to public spaces and recreational

opportunities. Sheffield said she believes the park investment will help address the root causes of blight, poverty and a lack of outdoor recreation spaces by creating a sense of pride to "alleviate the mental anguish of decades of disinvestment" in the city.

"This will lead to fostering better relationships with our neighbors, inject a sense of vibrancy back into our neighborhoods by bringing some of the most neglected areas of our city back to life, and it'll also lead to current residents choosing to stay in their neighborhoods and also attracting new residents," Sheffield said.

Here are a few details about the Southwest Greenway:

## **What is it?**

The Southwest Greenway is a non-motorized half-mile pathway designed as part of the 27.5-mile Joe Louis Greenway.

## **Where is it located?**

Located at 2209 Bagley St., the pathway runs from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park on West Jefferson to Bagley Street. It connects the riverfront to Michigan Central Station and the Joe Louis Greenway, and to surrounding neighborhoods for residents and visitors to access.

## **When was it built?**

Construction took 18 months but partners spent five years acquiring the needed properties to build the pathway.

## **Who can use it?**

Anyone who wishes to walk, run or ride a bike.

## **Who's behind it?**

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, city of Detroit, Ford Motor Co. Fund, William Davidson Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation and the Gilbert Family Foundation.

## What residents are saying

Detroit resident Ru Shann Long said, for too long, Detroiters were not taken into account for developments, especially when properties were left abandoned.

"Many of us have been waiting for change," Long said. "Greenways are bigger than just a bike trail and a walking trail. But what we have to do as Detroiters, and for visitors, and those that live around the area, come and use it. It's no good if we don't utilize it, if we don't promote it."

Tatiana Pastor, who lives in southwest Detroit, plans to bike through the greenway to commute 5 miles to her workplace.

"It means everything as a bicycle commuter, as a pedestrian, as a motor vehicle (driver)," Pastor said. "Personally, I've always thought it was a really special neighborhood."

Ann Adams, who has lived in Detroit for 40 years and has memories of the area when the Michigan Central Station was bustling, called the space a big transformation.

"It means a lot that, hopefully, that the city is coming back alive. People will move back into the city, bring their children and to experience some of the city," Adams said.

## Other celebrations

Officials also announced more than \$70 million in new funding for the Unified Greenway Campaign, an effort to raise \$350 million to complete the Detroit Riverfront, fund construction of the Joe Louis Greenway and create an endowment to help maintain and operate both projects. In April, Duggan and City Council authorized up to \$6 million a year to support the operations.

## A deeper look

The Unified Greenway Campaign partnership includes the city of Detroit, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy and the Joe Louis Greenway Partnership. The campaign launched in 2022 and raised \$229 million in less than two years, according to a news release. The \$70 million commitment includes \$35 million from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, \$20 million from the William Davidson Foundation, about \$10 million from the Gilbert Family Foundation, with another \$5 million for an accompanying economic development

strategy, and \$5 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The \$350 million investment in public spaces will include \$200 million to build the Joe Louis Greenway, \$50 million to complete the Detroit Riverfront and \$100 million to establish the Unified Greenway Endowment at the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

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