

# *The Detroit RiverWalk*

*Welcoming to All, With Benefits to All!*

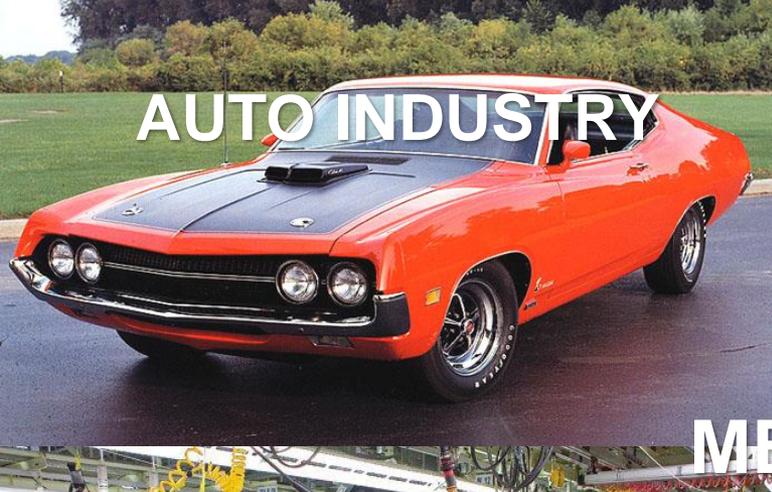
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University of Windsor

Great Lakes Science-Policy Advisor, International Association for Great Lakes Research





**WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU  
THINK OF DETROIT?**



**AUTO INDUSTRY**



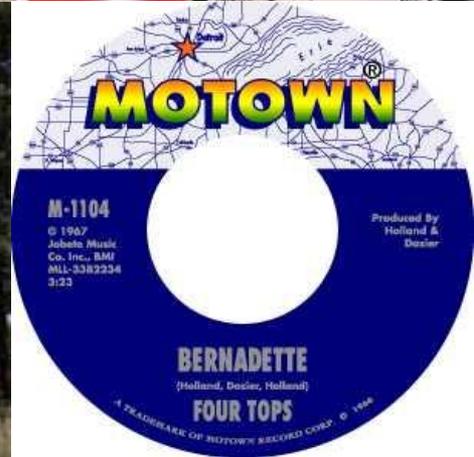
**DETROIT  
METROPOLITAN  
COMMUNITY**



**SPORTS!**



**MANUFACTURING**

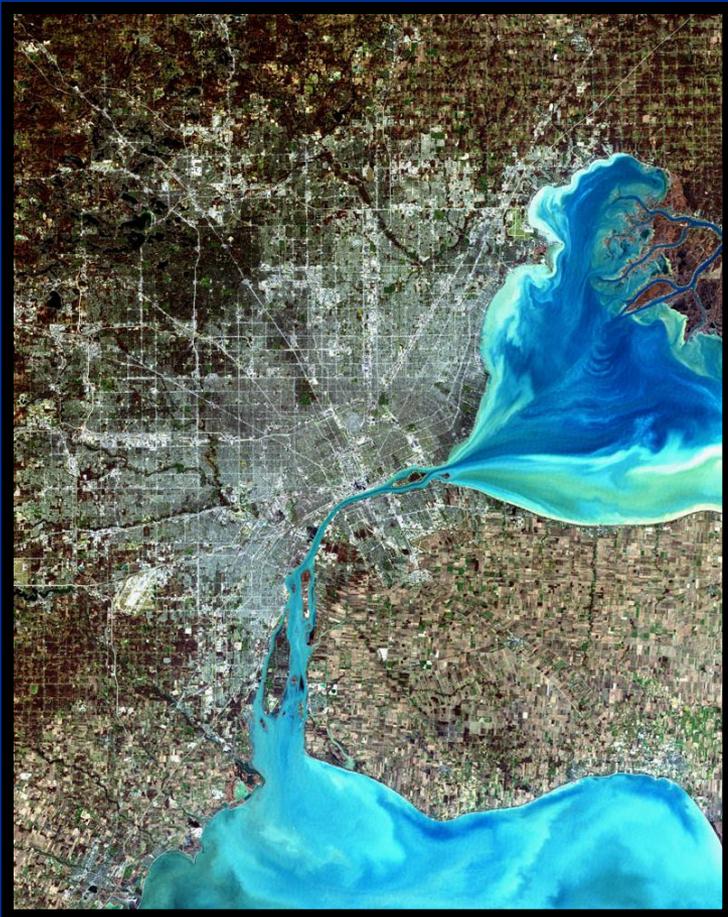


**AVAILABLE  
LAND**

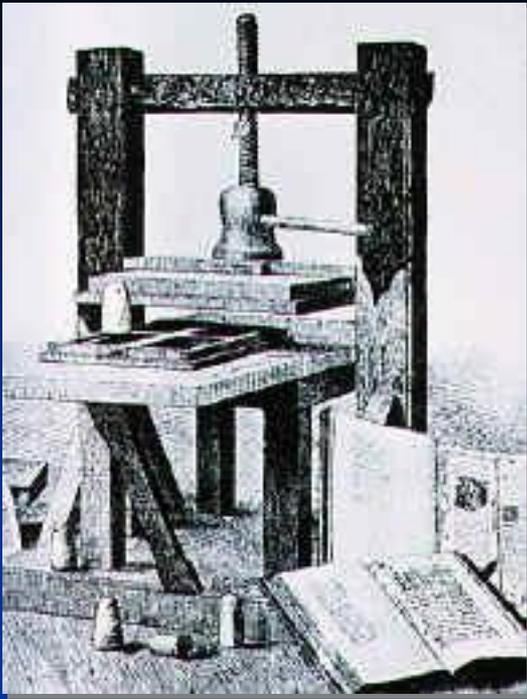


**PUBLIC ART**

# Metropolitan Detroit has Experienced a Number of Paradigm Shifts



**Paradigm Shift =  
a significant  
change in thinking  
that results in a  
completely  
changed view or  
outlook**



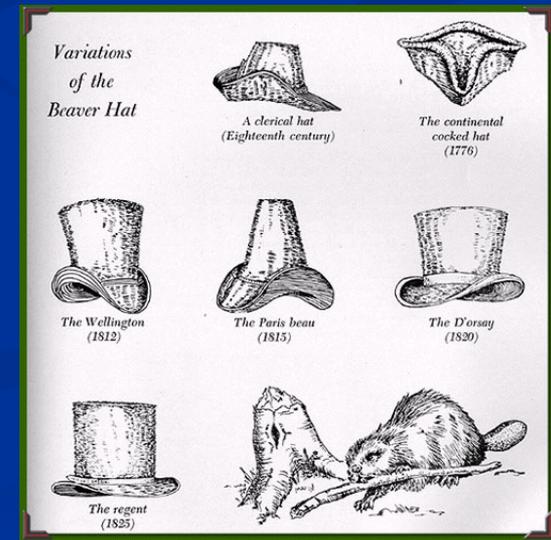
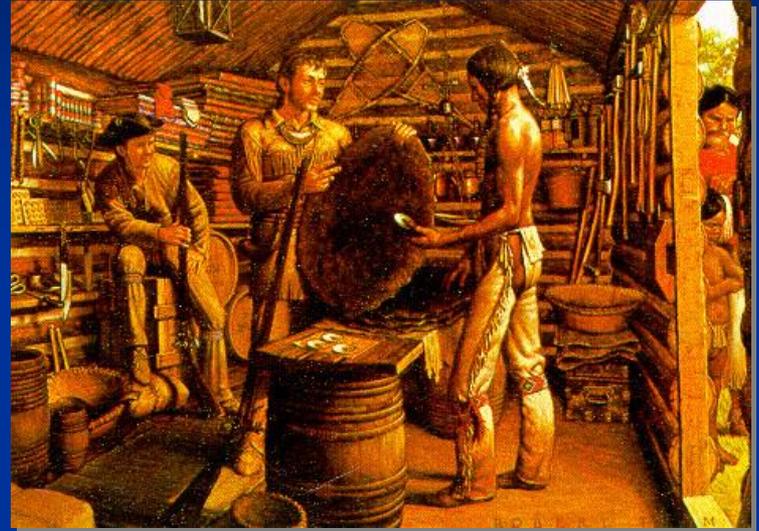
**PRINTING  
PRESS**



**PERSONAL COMPUTER**

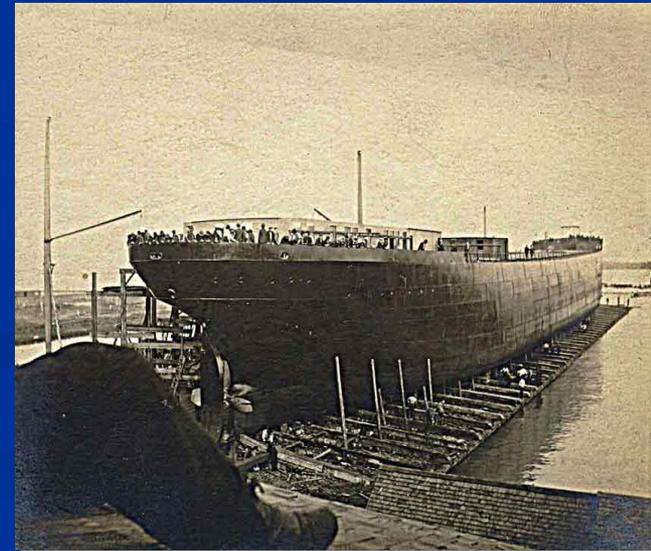
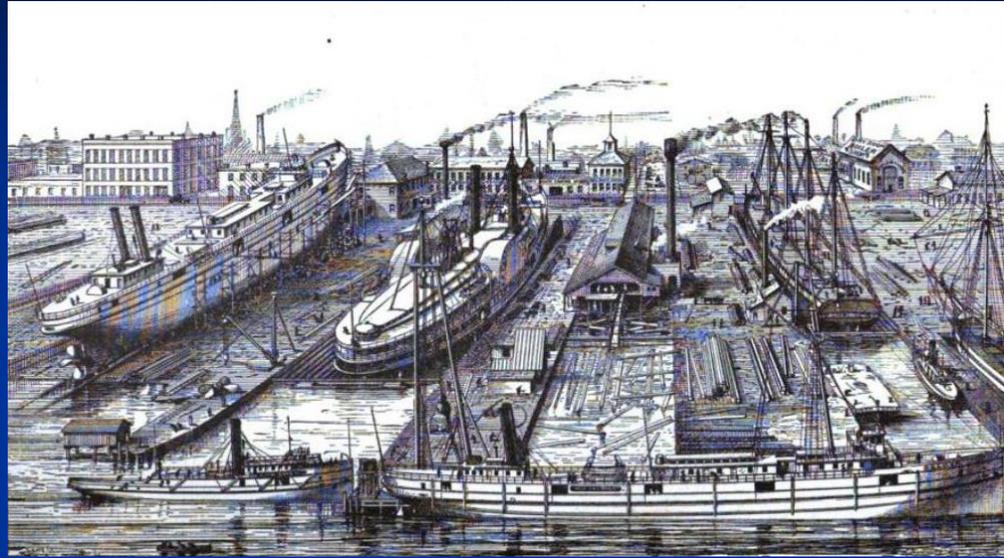
# FUR TRADE – DETROIT’S FIRST PARADIGM SHIFT

- The height of the Fur Trade was in 1700s and 1800s
- Hundreds of thousands of beaver skins were exported annually



# SHIP BUILDING PARADIGM SHIFT

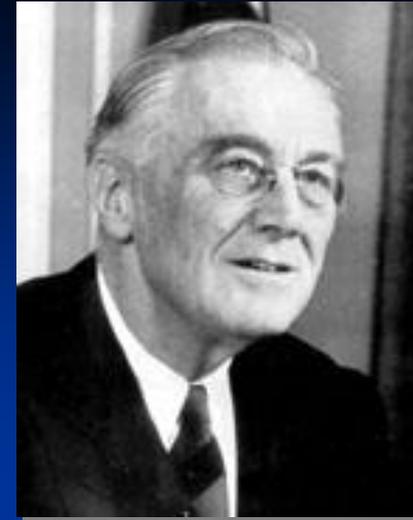
- During the 1890s more ships were built along the Detroit River than any other city in America
- On December 3, 1819 the Detroit River was declared a public highway by Act of Congress



# AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURING PARADIGM SHIFT



# ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY PARADIGM SHIFT



- During WWII President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the need to supply implements of war and called for the United States to become the great “Arsenal of Democracy”



# CONSEQUENCES

- Frequently, there are unintended consequences of paradigm shifts
- The fur trade paradigm shift led to the virtual extinction of the beaver in our region
- the “Arsenal of Democracy” paradigm shift resulted in substantial oil pollution



# Oil Pollution

- In 1946-1948, 5.9 million gallons of oil & other petroleum products were discharged into the Rouge and Detroit rivers each year
- Enough to pollute the entire western basin of Lake Erie



# LAKE ERIE IS DEAD!

TIME

August 20, 1965

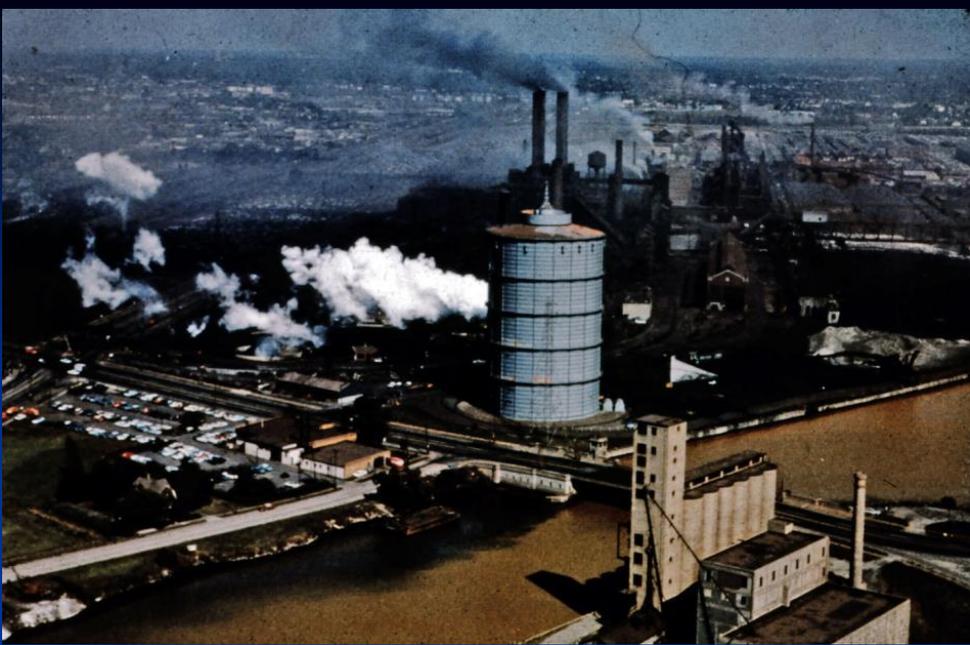


# Citizen Protest in the 1960s



# Raw Sewage and Industrial Waste Dumped Into the River





# The Rouge River Caught on Fire in 1969



# THE MERCURY CRISIS OF 1970





# Earth Day 1970



# Environmental Awakening

## Catalysts:

- Winter waterfowl die-offs in 1960 and 1967
- Silent Spring
- Eutrophication of Lake Erie
- Burning of the Rouge and Cuyahoga rivers
- Mercury Crisis of 1970

## Led to:

- Earth Day in 1970
- Canada Water Act in 1970
- U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972
- Canada-U.S. GLWQA of 1972
- U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973

**Over Four Decades of Pollution  
Prevention and Control under the  
1970 Canada Water Act, 1972 Clean  
Water Act and U.S.-Canada Great  
Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and  
1973 U.S. Endangered Species Act**



- Substantial reductions in oil discharges and spills have occurred, and winter duck kills due to oil pollution have been eliminated
- Billions of dollars have been spent on municipal wastewater treatment and virtually all plants in Michigan and Ontario are achieving 2<sup>o</sup> treatment
- 90% decline in phosphorus concentration and loading from the Detroit WWTP
- Since 1960 there has been an over 80% reduction in untreated CSO volume from communities in southeast Michigan



- Between the 1960s and 1980s there was an over 4,000 tonnes/day decrease in chloride loadings to the Detroit River
- 70% decline in mercury and a 90% decline of DDT in fish (yet health advisories remain)
- 90% decline in DDE and 85% decline in PCBs in herring gull eggs
- Over one million m<sup>3</sup> of contaminated sediment remediated at a cost of over \$154 million



**THESE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPROVEMENTS  
ARE HEARTENING,  
BUT THAT IS NOT  
THE BEST PART OF  
THE STORY!**

# Ecological Recovery

- ❑ 25 active Bald Eagle nests after a 25-year absence
- ❑ Peregrine Falcons back and fledging 30 young
- ❑ Osprey nested in Gibraltar in 2009 – the first time in Wayne County since 1890s
- ❑ Sturgeon reproduction documented in 2001 – the first time in 30 years
- ❑ Whitefish spawning documented in the Detroit River in 2006 – first time since 1916
- ❑ In the 1970s, the walleye population was in crisis; today we are considered part of the “Walleye Capital of the World”
- ❑ Beaver are back in at least six locations in the watershed



# One of the Most Remarkable Ecological Recovery Stories in North America!



# Environmental and Natural Resource Challenges

- Population growth, transportation expansion, and land use changes
- Habitat loss and degradation
- Nonpoint source pollution
- Toxic substances contamination
- Introduction of exotic species
- Greenhouse gases and climate change

# Detroit Made the River its Backdoor





- For over a century, city planners identified the highest and best use of the waterfront was “industrial”
- Detroit was an industrial town and it had a working riverfront that supported industry and commerce
- And the Detroit River was perceived as just a working river in the industrial heartland



- Fewer people and industries
- Much underutilized and undervalued riverfront land
- Out of the convergence of growing public and private support to gain access to the Detroit River, revival of the river, new designations as American and Canadian Heritage Rivers, and the establishment of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge came an opportunity to re-envision the downtown Detroit waterfront as a gathering place for both people and wildlife

# Detroit Riverfront Conservancy



- Established in 2003
- 501 c 3 organization
- Public-private partnership
- 44-member Board of Directors
- Vision: Transform Detroit's international riverfront - the face of the city - into a beautiful, exciting, safe, accessible world-class gathering place for all

A vibrant, high-angle photograph of a park. In the foreground, a gravel path winds through a lush garden filled with various plants, including bright orange and red flowers. To the left, a blue body of water is visible, with a white stone bridge featuring multiple arches in the background. The sky is a clear, bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a pleasant day in a well-maintained park.

**“BEAUTIFUL, EXCITING,  
SAFE, ACCESSIBLE...”**



**...WORLD-CLASS GATHERING  
PLACE...**



..FOR ALL"

I ❤️ Detroit  
#SummerOnTheD

# Detroit Riverwalk



- \$110 million raised in the first 10 years
- In addition, \$40 million invested in an endowment to operate, care, maintain, and steward the Detroit RiverWalk



Before



After – Milliken State Park



Before



After – GM Plaza



Before



After – Cullen Plaza



Before



After – Milliken State Park



Before



After Stroh River Place



Before



After – Gabriel Richard Park

# And It Just Gets Better!



# Detroit Riverwalk



- Nearly 80% complete
- 3.5 miles completed
- 3 million annual visitors (surveys have shown that 90% of these visits would not have taken place without the riverfront improvements)
- City's most attractive feature
- Open every day, free, welcoming to all, and rapidly becoming a major tourist attraction
- The Detroit RiverWalk is rapidly becoming the iconographic image of Detroit in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and a key supporting element in Detroit's revival

# Economic Benefits (CSL International, 2013)

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS	
Riverfront construction and land value	\$1.548 billion
Portion attributable to riverfront	\$639 million
Construction period jobs	16,700
ANNUAL IMPACTS	
Total annual spending by visitors, residents, and employees	\$43.7 million
Combined annual spending: 2003-2013	\$360.6 million
Annual positive media value	\$600,000
Annual jobs	1,300
Total annual tax revenue generation	\$4.5 million

**TOTAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE FIRST 10 YEARS - \$1 BILLION**

A vibrant, sunny day on a boardwalk. In the foreground, a man in a black t-shirt and blue shorts walks towards the camera. To his right, a woman in a floral top and green pants walks away. Further right, a woman in a colorful striped tank top pushes a green stroller with a baby inside. Next to her, a man in a maroon t-shirt with 'TUSKEGEE' printed on it and black shorts walks towards the camera. To his right, a woman in a colorful patterned tank top and blue shorts walks away. The boardwalk is paved and lined with a metal railing on the left and lush green trees and bushes on the right. In the background, a large white boat is docked, and a suspension bridge spans across the water under a clear blue sky. The word 'PROGRAMMING' is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters across the center of the image.

# PROGRAMMING

# WALKS & RUNS





# GM READING & RHYTHM ON THE RIVERFRONT

A group of people are gathered on a grassy bank next to a river. In the foreground, a woman in a blue t-shirt is measuring a yellow fish. To her left, a woman in a green shirt with a red backpack is also fishing. In the background, a man in a blue shirt is fishing, and another man in a patterned jacket is standing near a wooden pier. A police officer in a dark uniform with a patch that says "MICHIGAN STATE POLICE" is standing on the right, holding a blue cup. A young girl in a white hoodie with black stars is looking towards the camera. A young boy in a grey shirt is sitting on a blue chair in the foreground. A woman in a light blue dress is sitting on a pink chair. A white bucket is on the ground. The river is in the background, with a city skyline and a bridge visible in the distance.

# FISHING FEST

A large, diverse crowd of people is gathered at an outdoor festival. In the foreground, a man in a light-colored uniform stands on a stage, speaking into a microphone. The crowd is seated on bleachers and is looking towards the speaker. In the background, there are various festival structures, including a colorful booth with American flags and a sign that says "FRESH CUT FRUIT". The scene is set in an urban area with tall buildings in the distance.

# GM RIVER DAYS

An aerial photograph of a social event on a greenway. The scene is filled with people, some walking and some on bicycles. There are several blue tents and a large mural on a building wall featuring a blue and purple abstract design. A yellow bus and a black van are parked on the right side. The text "SOIREE ON THE GREENWAY" is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

# SOIREE ON THE GREENWAY



# YOGA ON THE RIVER



# MOONLIGHT YOGA

# RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS



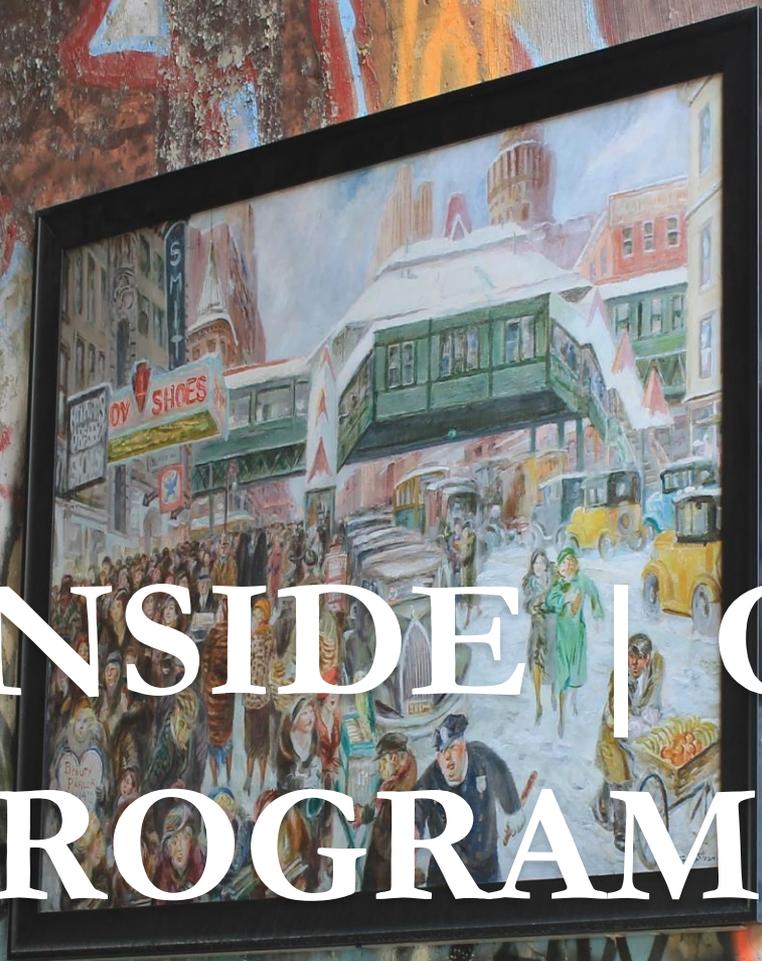


# SLOW ROLL ON THE CUT



# PUBLIC ART

# DIA INSIDE | OUT PROGRAM



Fourteenth Street at Sixth Avenue, 1914  
John Sloan  
Acquired in 1971  
DIA  
© 1914 Sloan

# HARVESTFEST IN THE D



The Detroit RiverWalk  
is welcoming to all and  
is striving to achieve  
benefits to all!



- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Detroit was the epicenter of the fur trade, an unparalleled leader of ship building for 100 years, the “Silicon Valley” of the industrial age, and the unquestioned leader of the Arsenal of Democracy.
- Detroit is a city of innovation, resilience, and leadership in responding to paradigm shifts.
- We have now entered the sustainability paradigm shift.
- Detroit has the ability to be a leader of sustainability paradigm shift, pivoting as it has at each previous paradigm shift, to redefine itself and lead the nation and world down a more sustainable path.



Thank you!