



MiSITES

2017: VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1 **MICHIGAN** CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Landscape Architects and Friends!

2017 has proven to be a busy year at the Chapter and National ASLA level, as well as at the practice level. Construction season has begun and it seems everyone is busy. Our chapter board has also been busy with events and planning.

In January we hosted a LARE prep session that was very well attended. Good luck to those sitting for your exams this year. We held our February and March Executive Committee meetings at MSU and U of M. It's always great to connect with our students.

As you know this is an interesting time in Washington. As the new administration works through their budget proposal, there are many items that Landscape Architects hold dear and funding sources that we utilize that may be on the chopping block. Chapter Trustee Bob Ford, ASLA, President-Elect Wes Landon, ASLA and I went to Washington DC at the end of April for mid-year meetings and lobby day. We met up with 4 other MiASLA members for lobby day. We had a great time talking to our Senators and Representatives about TIGER funding, Clean Water State Revolving Funds, and Land and Water Conservation Fund. MiASLA also led the way crafting an Advocacy Alert asking Congress to continue funding of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). As Landscape Architects, we need to continue advocating for the programs that help our profession. I ask everyone to ensure you have signed up for ASLA's iAdvocate Network at advocate.asla.org to keep up to date on these important issues.

As most of you know April was World Landscape Architecture Month. This year National ASLA issued a challenge to all the chapters to post a "This is Landscape Architecture" post to Instagram every day in April. In addition, each chapter took over National ASLA's Instagram feed for a day, 49 days in total. MiASLA's day to shine was April 27th and we knocked it out of the park. We were the first chapter to utilize "live stories", which showcased Landscape Architecture in Detroit, and we were the first chapter to employ a mosaic with our photos that outlined the state. Our photos had over 1,000 likes and our live story had over 3,000 views. This was a great way to showcase our State and the city of Detroit.

Speaking of Detroit, we have 3 articles in this issue that feature Detroit and its suburbs. Our Chapter's annual meeting will be held in Detroit on September 27th and 28th. Mark your calendars now, you won't want to miss this great event.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Linked-in. You can also stay up to date by checking out the chapter website at Michiganasla.org. All members should be receiving our chapter e-news. If you aren't receiving our emails, please send a message to membership@michiganasla.org. ■

Ben Baker, PLA, ASLA
President, Michigan Chapter of ASLA

ON THE COVER: This 1930s aerial of Palmer Park shows the remaining imprint of the Olmsted design, which had been abandoned in favor of a paved road and 18-hole golf course.
Image courtesy of Gibbs Planning Group.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

2017 MiASLA Annual Meeting, Sept. 27-28th
The Historic Gem Theatre, Detroit, Michigan

If you would like to contribute to MiSITES or have a topic of interest, please email: SITESpublications@michiganasla.org

PALMER PARK

Dan Mangum, ASLA
Gibbs Planning Group

Once on the verge of closure, Palmer Park is advancing the implementation of an ambitious master plan for over 300 acres of desirable parkland located along Woodward Avenue on Detroit's Northside. In 2013, realizing the significance of the park and the need for coordinated design and planning, member firms of the Michigan chapters of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) along with the community-based People for Palmer Park (PFPP), initiated a year-long planning process for the 120-year-old, and at one time, Olmsted & Eliot designed park. The PFPP organization had formed in response to a 2009 announcement that due to budget constraints the city would be closing the park. In a true grass roots effort, PFPP began maintaining the park and programming events that would increase interest, foster community, and restore the beloved park. Two years after forming the 501(c)(3) non-profit, it became clear to the group that a general vision was needed to guide their actions beyond the initial stabilization efforts. The partnership between the PFPP and the ASLA and CNU began with an introduction from Tim Karl, the City of Detroit's landscape architect, who understood that any investment beyond general maintenance, whether by the city or private grant, would need to be justified by a master plan that met the community's desires, addressed neglected infrastructure, and ensured a strong future for the historic park.

The history of Palmer Park dates back to the 1890s when Senator Thomas Palmer, who had been farming the land and using it as a vacation retreat, hired Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot to subdivide the land and create plans for an attractive and unrivaled park at its center. While the land was never subdivided, the Olmsted plan for the park was realized, and the parkland was deeded to Detroit by Senator Palmer in 1893 under the condition that it would be "a park for the good of all!" The park includes the only remaining log cabin in Detroit, which was designed by the famous architects Mason & Rice, the Merrill Fountain, which was originally located in Detroit's Campus Martius, and the remnants of a virgin forest that in the early 1900s was deemed by a convention of park commissioners to have a "greater variety of trees indigenous to the soil than there is in the whole of Europe."

continued on page 4

Following extensive research with the Olmsted Archives in Brookline, Massachusetts that uncovered the original plans (at the time it was called "Log Cabin Farm") and a trip to the Olmsted Papers at the Library of Congress to find correspondence between the firm and the Palmers, Gibbs Planning Group (project lead) recruited 12 firms and a small group of college students to participate in the master planning of Palmer Park. Seven alternative plans were created by the volunteer group of landscape architects, planners and architects to illustrate the potential for the park and to allow the community and city representatives to reach a consensus on the preferred elements of the design. Additional designs for road-diet, bike facilities, stormwater retention and community buildings and shelters were also presented to the community.

"The opportunity to bring to light the brilliance of a little-known Olmsted plan here in Detroit while learning of the cultural and community significance of the park from the surrounding neighborhoods was a privilege enjoyed by the entire planning team," said Bob Gibbs, president of Gibbs Planning Group. Gibbs estimates that the participating firms contributed a total of 2,500 volunteer hours during the plan's creation.

Two years and several public meetings after the first contact between PFPP and the planning team, the consensus master plan and supporting documentation was completed. The plan calls for thoughtfully restoring Olmsted's original design which had been covered over during the construction of the golf course in the 1920s, while revitalizing the natural areas that had caught the attention of the nation's park commissioners over a century ago. Given the park's eminent location and potential for mass transit along the Woodward edge, two prominent entries at Seven Mile and Merrill Plaisance invite visitors into the park and connect to a series of paths intended to address the lack of circulation the community lamented during the public meetings. Much needed improvements to the golf course take shape as it is converted to a championship 9-hole course, enabling the hard edges of the existing perimeter to be converted to more inviting active and passive open-space. With a nod to sustainability, a modest urban garden is proposed to be expanded, reflecting the land's early days as Senator Palmer's

Master Plan for **Palmer Park** Detroit, Michigan

People
for
Palmer
Park

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- ① Northwest Entry
- ② Palmer Park Golf Club & Terrace
- ③ Championship 9-Hole Golf Course
- ④ North East Entry & Fountain
- ⑤ Multi-Purpose Lawn
- ⑥ Woodward Promenade
- ⑦ Parisian Strip-Street with Parking
- ⑧ East Entry
- ⑨ Tennis Facility
- ⑩ Pedestrian Access to Lake/Cabin Area
- ⑪ South East Entry, Restaurant & Market Square
- ⑫ Enhanced Lake Frances, Lake House & Naturalized Shore
- ⑬ Performance Pavilion
- ⑭ Restored Log Cabin
- ⑮ Detroit Mounted Police & Investigation
- ⑯ Native Forest Restoration
- ⑰ Splash Park & Children's Play
- ⑱ Farm, Barn & Market
- ⑲ Southwest Entry & Traffic Circle
- ⑳ Expanded Orchard
- ㉑ Covington Access
- ㉒ Great (Multi-Purpose) Meadow
- ㉓ Picnic Pavilions
- ㉔ New Lake

- Paved Trail
- Rustic Trail
- ★ Civic Art Location
- Children's Play Area



PALMER PARK (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

farm and the tree and shrub nursery for the City of Detroit. Additionally, the plan proposes to limit, if not eliminate, the park's reliance on the City's stormwater infrastructure and enhance the once spring-fed Lake Frances.

Reflecting on the development of the master plan, Rochelle Lento, Board President of the People for Palmer Park, remarked, "the process of community engagement, beginning with a visioning session and culminating with community response and reaction to a medley of master plan concepts, truly brought the voice of the neighborhoods to the process. The master plan, which is revisited by the Palmer Park Board of Directors on a regular basis, has provided a road map and guide as we navigate development plans for Palmer Park."

Initial implementation has already begun with the redesign and resurfacing of the tennis courts and PFPF is actively pursuing grants for projects pursuant to the grand vision for Palmer Park. Most recently, they were awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation to plan for the restoration and revival of Lake Frances. One of the original master plan team members, Conservation Design Forum (CDF) was selected by PFPF to complete the Lake Frances Plan which "identified and articulated a set of green infrastructure strategies to address stormwater runoff, water quality, and habitat in and adjacent to the lake, which will improve its overall scenic beauty and ecology," said David Yocca, FASLA and Principal of CDF. "Contingent upon continued support from the Kresge Foundation and others, these improvements will be made later this year, and begin to illustrate the incredible potential the integration of high-performance, sustainable practices offers to enhance historic landscape settings such as Palmer Park." The City of Detroit has also announced \$400,000 worth of funding to stabilize the Log Cabin and rehabilitate it into a community center.

Summarizing the efforts of the planning team, Lento added "The People for Palmer Park is eternally grateful for the work of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Congress for New Urbanism. . . While there is still much to be done, we are closer each day to a park for the good of all!"

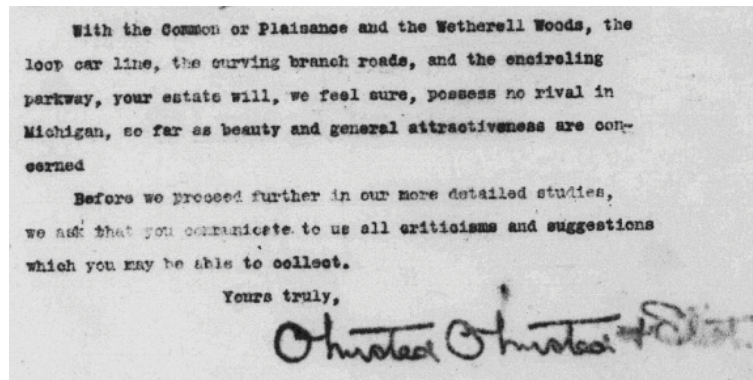
Participating firms: Gibbs Planning Group (lead), Archive DS, ASTI Environmental, Campbell Planning and Architecture, Conservation Design Forum, department 01, Downtown Solutions Inc., DPOP!, Hamilton Anderson Architects, Kenneth Weikal Landscape Architecture, Living Lab Detroit, McIntosh-Poris Architects. ■

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Gibbs Planning Group





IMAGE: There are several paths through Palmer Park and the wooded areas. Much of the virgin forest was illegally logged prior to 1950 and invasive species are prevalent.
Image courtesy of Gibbs Planning Group.



ABOVE: Correspondence between Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot was uncovered at the Library of Congress. In this excerpt, the designers ensure that the estate will “possess no rival in Michigan, so far as beauty and general attractiveness are concerned.”
Image courtesy of Gibbs Planning Group.



IMAGE: The year-long planning process included several community meetings and design workshops. Here several of the volunteers participate in a park walkthrough with members of People for Palmer Park.
Image courtesy of Gibbs Planning Group.

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EVERCENTRE

SOUTHFIELD CITY CENTRE'S ANSWER TO URBAN SPRAWL

By Terry Croad, AICP, ASLA
City of Southfield

The City of Southfield is Joel Garreau's quintessential "Edge City", developed in the auto-centric 1960's.

Southfield City Centre is a district largely dominated by auto-oriented land-use patterns and populated by office parks and strip commercial plazas; it is at a critical turning point in suburban redevelopment. Southfield now seeks to redefine their economic growth strategy at a more personal scale with the careful mixed-use redevelopment of this 8.9-acre site located at the prime intersection of Evergreen Road and Civic Center Drive.

The goal of the "EverCentre" plan is to create a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, urban "place" adjacent to the Southfield Municipal Campus that combines the aspirations of a high-profile business climate with a commitment to walkability, community, and sense of place. The vision plan was prepared with the assistance of Hamilton-Anderson & Gibbs Planning Group.

This plan provides the vision and redevelopment tools to assist the City in facilitating the development of a highly walkable and dynamic environment while linking previously separated places within the district. Moreover, the development can be the lynch pin that strengthens the "Town and Gown" relationship between Lawrence Technological University (LTU) and the City of Southfield.

"This plan understands Detroit is the car dominant force and in planning for Southfield the proposal finds an appropriate balance between caring for the car and creating a pedestrian friendly destination that our students will completely appreciate. Because of its proximity [10 minute walk from northern campus] and its vitality, this development will also help make Lawrence Tech University a more attractive institution to prospective students and their families." Karl Daubmann, AIA, FAAR, Dean and Professor, College of Architecture and Design, LTU.





***Proposed character at the intersection of Evergreen Road and Civic Center Drive.
Image courtesy of the City of Southfield..***

Rather than following the typical development patterns of this expansive suburb, this plan introduces a more compact footprint, has a greater mix of uses, and prioritizes the design of the pedestrian environment more so than any other developments in the City's history — all of which are supported by recent updates to the City's Sustainable Southfield master plan and flexible Overlay Development zoning district.

The vision plan was based upon recent market studies, which indicate that the site could potentially support 184,000 sq. ft. of retail space, including restaurants and flex space; 250 units of residential (including multi-family rental and condos); a parking garage, boutique hotel & conference center, and a linear public park.

This project evolved from: the need for attraction and retention of “young” professionals, to spur economic development, and to create a district center with a “Sense of Place”.

“The Southfield City Centre redevelopment plan really captures the vision that we have for Southfield and has the potential to be a huge attraction for not only professionals, but existing residents and students alike, linking previously separated places within the City of Southfield.” – Southfield Mayor Kenson Siver

With a historic development pattern that is decidedly suburban, the major challenge and accomplishment was to reach consensus around a vision that integrates culture, retail, recreation, and housing in a mixed-use pedestrian oriented environment, versus a car-oriented development. As walkable urban places continue to regain popularity, this project seeks to maximize an opportunity to reconfigure a key site at the heart of a major economic district to create a sustainable, walkable, and diverse place. The plan is intentionally and distinctly different from sprawling developments in the past and yet compatible and highly marketable with the surrounding district, City, and region.



This plan exceeds average design for suburban “town centers”, particularly in Metro Detroit, which have sought to create a sense of “main street” culture but do not always have the foresight, resources, or capacity to do so without resulting in single-use, low density development with a sea of surrounding surface parking.

“EverCentre” proposes an urban form that combines a dense mix of uses with public space made possible by introducing a parking structure and upper level uses that blend into the existing context, including rather than excluding the surrounding district. Further, the plan builds upon the recent \$12.1 million dollar reinvestment of the Evergreen Road corridor (see MiSITES 2016: Vol. 10, No. 1) and other recent Placemaking investments throughout the City Centre District.

While modest in scale, this plan is a major step in the District’s transformation from auto-dependent to pedestrian-oriented, from center-less to having a meaningful center. The plan connects existing assets in the district and creates the opportunity for street life by establishing a pedestrian friendly street grid activated by ground-floor retail, serving as a vibrant connection between the municipal campus and surrounding office and residential towers. Understanding that for this vision plan to be implemented, the City and community partners have committed to carrying forward a set of guiding principles throughout the design process and into construction, maintenance, and operation. The principals are further enumerated with specific design guidelines to ensure the architecture and public spaces will be developed with the key qualities of a walkable urban place. The design guidelines directly relate to the program and its form, consisting of instructions such as building placement, vertical program organization, front façade orientation, floor-to ceiling heights, street sections, streetscape elements, and programming of public spaces.

Planning and designing for the site faced many challenges. In presenting a vision that significantly departs from development of the City’s past, the project team learned the value of an extensive stakeholder education process and the rising importance of public-private partnerships to convert

Left: Character of proposed view from above, looking northeast toward City Hall. Image courtesy of the City of Southfield..

transformational ideas into action.

“The City Centre plan has Southfield poised to raise the bar for surrounding communities. As a local developer, I’m excited about the possibility of offering a product of this type that is truly unique and in high demand within the regional market.” -Hassan Jawad, City Centre Real Estate Group.

By researching and gaining an understanding for funding, phasing, and best practices, the project team integrated this partnership commitment into the plan, effectively establishing a foundation to incentivize developers into building this mixed-use, amenity-rich, compact, walkable vision.

Where the highway plans of the 1950s sought to connect suburbs to the center by automobiles, this concept seeks to link institutions, working spaces, and municipal functions to its own walkable center. Living in a pedestrian-friendly city can make you healthier and happier. New research shows it’s good for commerce, too. Incomes and education rates are higher in more pedestrian-friendly areas. Walkability and proximity to shopping, restaurants and work are becoming increasingly important to buyers, especially young buyers.

Rather than following the typical development patterns of sprawling suburbs, this plan introduces a concept that is more compact, has a greater mix of uses and prioritizes the design of the pedestrian environment more so than any other development in the City’s history.

In conclusion, this vision plan and its role within the district’s larger transformation strategy could become a model that sparks municipalities’ and developers’ interest in redeveloping suburban sites in a more incremental, pedestrian friendly and sustainable way. ■

For more information contact:

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*Proposed character at the Evergreen pedestrian crossing to the site.
Image courtesy of the City of Southfield..*



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DETROIT'S RESURGENCE OFFERS GROWTH

By Erin Kelly, ASLA
City of Detroit

Detroit's resurgence offers the potential of tremendous growth for Michigan's landscape architects and landscape professionals.

As a city more obviously marked by landscape—and frequently rendered charismatic by its lack of buildings—it is surprising how few landscape architects are involved in the day to day work of Detroit's revitalization. Historically and at present, urban planners have lead this work—professional, skillful facilitators who often lack the materials understanding of urban systems required to intervene with physical outcomes.

Detroit is the urban center of Michigan and as such should be the showpiece for public realm and institutional design. With new stormwater management requirements coming online through the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) in the spring of 2017, all new construction in Detroit will be required to meet minimum stormwater management requirements. In addition, existing property will be penalized through a new monthly drainage charge of \$740 per impervious acre. Together this creates a large potential stream of work for landscape architects at many different scales, ranging from residential to industrial clients now required to consider the management of stormwater on site.

At the same time, this past spring Detroit celebrated the beginning of its second year as the only UNESCO-designated City of Design in North America. "The UNESCO City of Design designation offers a platform for Detroit's creative talent to promote their work to a global audience while demonstrating the impact of their work in creating a more sustainable and equitable future to our own community," said Olga Stella, Executive Director of the Detroit Creative Corridor Center (DC3). She continues, "There is a huge opportunity for landscape architects to participate in given the challenges Detroit faces with its vacant land and opportunity to transform that land through landscape design. Detroit could be a model of large scale land transformation, and the work of our landscape community could be an example to others globally."

With 19 ASLA members currently accounted for in Detroit and 82 in the Detroit Metro Area, one begins to wonder if we have enough landscape professionals in Detroit to connect this trend of local growth to local design and construction employment opportunities. Through Detroit's revitalization, the entire supply chain, and not only the design services side, will require a revival. As one example, in February 2014, the City of Detroit had one landscape architect on staff for an enterprise of approximately 9,000 employees; today, in February 2017, there are 10 landscape design professionals working for the City across two departments.

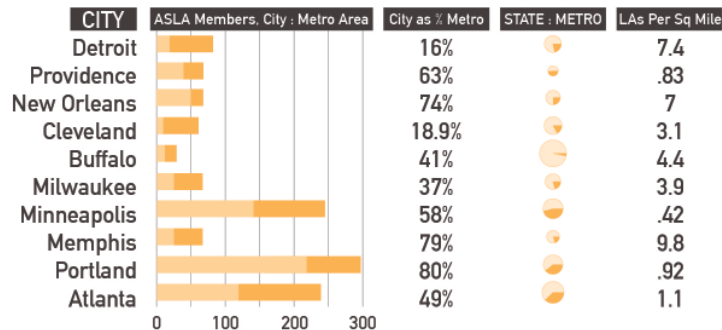
"The Mayor, along with city residents really see the value of parks right now - as healthy, community spaces that improve quality of life and help to stabilize neighborhoods," said Mike Jacobs, Associate ASLA and landscape designer with the City of Detroit's Park Design Unit. "We are incredibly busy with park renovation work - we will have significant capital improvement projects underway in over fifty parks this year alone - we've recently added another landscape designer to help us get through it all. If things keep going this way I could certainly see the need to add more LA's to our staff. With a system of over 300 parks, there's endless work for landscape architects."

Amidst this growth, our state chapter has the opportunity right now to better welcome and solicit new members, and perhaps most importantly to present a unified voice and position to advocate for greater access to this work by Michigan-based companies.

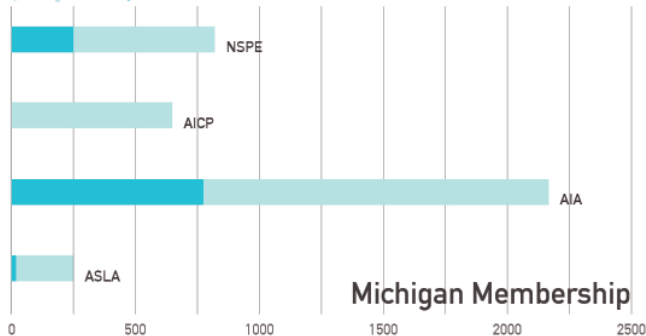
Michigan is an aging state with a net population loss. How is this reflected in our membership? Available data does not reveal the age distribution of our current membership. Further information surrounding the movement of recent landscape architectural students might help us begin to unpack the path from education, to employment, to licensure and a mature career in Michigan. In the absence of this data, one might assume that the 'brain drain' trend that marks Michigan as a whole extends as well to our recent graduates.

Amongst cities surveyed, Detroit as one of the lowest percent of representation by Detroit-based landscape architects. Detroit is home to only 16% of the ASLA members in the Detroit metropolitan area.

ASLA Membership by Metro Area



[Michigan Detroit]



Michigan by the Numbers



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How can our chapter have a stronger presence in growth markets such as Detroit, and begin to connect practitioners to the landscape planning and design opportunities emerging and a multitude of scales? Are there improved digital platforms that might help us bridge our geographic connections and contexts? And what is the chapter doing to welcome new members and celebrate new licensees in Michigan?

Our inability to act soon and raise our voices as a unified chapter and organization may mean that Detroit's resurgence will sidestep the opportunity to build local and Michigan based design capacity, and rather rely more heavily on a strategy of importing design talent.

These are questions for the total Michigan supply chain, from the education of designers, to an appropriate range and scale of employment settings, to Michigan-based suppliers and growers, to a diverse and qualified set of construction partners and professionals. Michigan and Detroit based landscape architects deserve both: access to the emerging work opportunities and the opportunity to grow our professional capacities.■

For more information contact:

Erin Kelly, ASLA
 City of Detroit



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Want to get involved? MiASLA is always looking for chapter members to participate at a greater level. Please feel free to reach out to the Executive Committee or staff members: manager@michiganasla.org

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