

A photograph of a city park with a paved path, trees, and skyscrapers in the background. The path is paved and curves through a green lawn. Large, leafy trees line both sides of the path. In the background, several tall office buildings are visible under a clear blue sky. The word "MiSITES" is overlaid in large white letters, with a small outline of Michigan above the 'i'.

MiSITES

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 3

MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings members and friends!

We welcome our 2021 new board members Patrick Judd as President-Elect, Allison Marusic as VP of Education, and Arianna Zannetti as Associate Member-at-Large. We are very grateful for returning members Wendy Fry as Secretary, Kyle Verseman as Member-at-Large, and Scott Black as VP of Membership. Continuing their terms are Tim Shoemaker as Treasurer, Chet Hill as Trustee, Adam Fercho as VP of Government Affairs, and Joanne Westphal as President starting November 18. Stephanie Onwenu will be heading up the DEI committee. Many thanks to past-president Ben Baker for five years of service as president-elect, president, and past-president.

I hope you all had a chance to attend one of our many fall events including the Detroit Month of Design LA Ride, which was a huge success. I want to thank Bob Ford and his team for their extraordinary efforts, as the ride was flawless. Others involved who deserve our appreciation include Maleah Rakestraw, Pete Bosheff, Rayshaun Landrum, Chet Hill, Lindsay Fercho, Nick Wallace, Laura Frederickson, Kim Dietzel, and Lauren Washburn. A special thanks also goes to D-Town Riders Bike Club, the Michigan ASLA Executive Committee, Kiana Wenzell of Design Core, and our many sponsors. You can read more about them, the eight-stop route, and the engaging group of speakers in Bob Ford's LA Ride article found later in this issue.

The pandemic has brought much sadness, disruption, and separation. It has forced us to adapt and reinvent our place of work. To help overcome this, Michigan ASLA has utilized virtual communications to bring together remote groups, letting our committees carry on without inconvenience. This has helped create more opportunities for members to stay involved and benefit from our educational sessions and programs via webinars and virtual meetings. The many efforts our chapter has integrated include:

- Virtual social events and CEU educational webinars
- Collaboration and communication with National ASLA and state chapters through Basecamp
- Creation of a program for fundraising and information regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Among these educational efforts, Bob Gibbs' session was sensational. His presentation was a perfect demonstration of knowing the science behind the design. His talk was truly an inspiration to us all. We wrapped up our fall series of virtual education with wonderfully executed sessions with speakers John McGovern and Damon Leverett.

We are looking forward to a new normal and devoting our energies to make it a better normal for our members. There is much work still to be done. Good health to you and your family,

Joane Slusky, PLA, ASLA
President, Michigan Chapter of ASLA

ON THE COVER:

A bird's eye view of the Southfield Rail-to-Trail. This segment links LTU's athletic complex with north campus allowing sports enthusiasts and students to experience more of the City Centre. Image source: Echo Media

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SHARE AN IDEA!

We're currently filling our 2021 editorial calendar. If you would like to contribute to MiSITES or suggest a topic or project to cover, please email: SITESpublication@michiganasla.org.

STUDYING FOR THE LARE?

If you would like to sign up for LARE study groups, please email Dana at education@michiganasla.org.



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A PRIMER FOR DESIGNERS AND PLANNERS IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Joanne M. Westphal, FASLA, FCELA, Landscape Architect and Physician

When I joined the Landscape Architecture faculty at Michigan State University in 1987, I had no idea that my teaching assignments would eventually lead to a degree in Medicine and a specialty in Therapeutic Site Design. Most of my prior academic work at Texas A&M and the University of Wisconsin focused on natural resource management, environmental impacts of recreation, and park planning and design. The LA492 Senior Research Seminar course for undergraduates at Michigan State annually challenged both students and instructor in issues relating to health in the built environment.

In true Land Grant spirit, as faculty we were expected to address practical problems of the state's constituency. As a result, requests for assistance on outdoor projects affecting nursing home residents — including dementia, post-stroke, post heart-attack, and traumatic brain injury patients — began to stack up. Help from the two medical schools and one nursing college on campus was nearly impossible to acquire. A program introduced in 1989 by the administration encouraged faculty to return to school to retrain and retool for the next

technologic revolution—a vague reference to the digital revolution for which few of us were prepared. I took the opportunity to train in medicine so I could take on health-related projects and teach with authority at the nexus between medicine and site design.

COMMUNICATIVE DISEASES 101

There are a few things that are useful to know right off the bat when it comes to infectious disease:

Medical Terminology. First and foremost, designers will need to learn some basic medical terms. Learning the common medical lexicon gives a designer an edge on the competition in terms of understanding an infectious disease and conceptualizing what can be done about it in terms of design. For example, diseases transmitted from one organism to another will be described with one of the below terms, which will tell you about the disease's origin and how far it is likely to spread. Even medical practitioners misuse these terms, but you

shouldn't if you have them clearly defined in your mind's eye.

- *Epidemic* — disease that affects a large number of people in a confined area.
- *Pandemic* — epidemic that has spread beyond its confined area to multiple areas, continents, or globally.
- *Endemic* — continuous disease within a particular population or country, e.g. malaria.
- *Outbreak* — a greater-than-anticipated increase in the number of endemic cases. It can also be a single case in a new area. If it is not quickly controlled, an outbreak can become an epidemic.

Causal Source, Transmission Mode. The next important pieces of information are cause (doctors call it etiology) and mode of transmission; what family of viruses or bacteria is the organism from and how is it communicated from one organism to the next?²¹ In the case of coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19, health care officials determined the virus was from the virulent *Corona ssp.* family, a particularly deadly group of viruses. Initially they thought COVID-19 was spread through contact with surfaces that were contaminated by individuals who were infected, like its sister virus SARS from the same family; as a result, gloves and robust hand washing were recommended. Further research showed that close contact within a small space through airborne viral particles was the most likely condition for spreading the disease. Thus, social distancing, masks, and quarantine became the recommended protocol for preventing the spread of COVID-19 infections.

(Left) People walk down Main Street in Ann Arbor as several Michigan communities have closed select streets to cars as a way to boost commerce during the pandemic. Image Source: Doug Coombe / Second Wave Michigan

(Right) Two blocks of Front Street were converted to pedestrian-only for the summer. Image Source: Traverse City DDA





Transmission/Progression. The third vital piece of information is its transmission and life cycle (progression). According to Jefferson and Heneghan (2020)², over the past 130 years, ten major pandemics have occurred; 8 of the 10 were global and 2 were limited to continents. Half involved 2 or more phases (waves) with short latent periods between. It is likely that COVID-19 will display at least 2 waves and possibly more, until a vaccine or widespread exposure to the disease creates “herd immunity” to the virus.

Target Host. COVID-19 appears to attack those with immature (e.g., children) or compromised (e.g., elderly, HIV, etc.) immune systems. Therefore, whatever we can do to focus our design work to create safe, accessible outdoor spaces for these populations will reduce transmission within the larger population of caregivers and families.

WHAT COVID-19 MEANS FOR DESIGNERS AND PLANNERS

From my perspective, it represents an opportunity. Designers and planners are unlikely to impact the current situation with COVID-19 because of the practical timeframe involved in getting projects completed. But what we can do is rethink projects that are on the drawing board right now in terms of some of the principles of design and planning that have directed much of our outdoor public/private space construction over the past 40 to 50 years, and “reimagine” those spaces in terms of disease transmission and prevention.



For example, do the principles of good public space design as put forth by William Whyte in *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*³ still have relevancy in the era of COVID-19 and beyond? How will placemaking practices evolve to ensure safe and attractive places in the 21st century following COVID-19?⁴ Will the basic biological roots of human existence (i.e., territoriality and adaptation) that are based on the needs to survive⁵ be outdistanced by cultural influences of space, environmental perception, and personal experiences — all of which are highly influenced by technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and digital communications? Will we remember that humans are organisms *dependent* on other species of organisms and the environment to survive? Will

we be wary enough of this dependency and acknowledge that *not all organisms are working in our interests* — they survive by attacking us physically, mentally, and/or socially. How can we create a homeland that affords greater protection in the realm of community health?

These are the challenges that will face this generation of designers and planners as we look beyond COVID-19 to the new realities, opportunities, and dangers created by a truly global community. •

¹The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) will be the first to publish accurate information on both the cause and transmission of an infectious disease. These two sources are readily available online to the public via their websites.

²Jefferson, Tom and Carl Heneghan. (2020). "COVID-19 — epidemic 'waves'". Center for Evidence-Based Medicine. University of Oxford. Oxford, UK. April 30, 2020. (<https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/covid-19-epidemic-waves>, last accessed September 13, 2020).

³Whyte, William. (1980). *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. New York, NY: Project for Public Spaces, Inc.

⁴Myrick, Phil. (2020). "The recovery will happen in public space". New York, NY: Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (<https://www.pps.org/article/the-recovery-will-happen-in-public-space>, last accessed September, 13, 2020)

⁵Hall, Edward T. (1969). *The Hidden Dimension*. New York, NY: Doubleday Anchor.

(Left) Due to COVID-19, extra safety precautions were taken at this year's LA Ride including temperature checks. Images Source: Bob Ford

(Right) Expanded outdoor patio areas allow for more social distancing while dining out. Image Source: Traverse City DDA



MAP LEGEND



HOTELS

- H-1: DETROIT MARRIOTT SOUTHFIELD
- H-2: COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT DETROIT SOUTHFIELD
- H-3: COMFORT SUITES SOUTHFIELD
- H-4: HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS & SUITES - SOUTHFIELD
- H-5: WESTIN SOUTHFIELD DETROIT
- H-6: HAWTHORN SUITES BY WYNDHAM DETROIT SOUTHFIELD
- H-7: CANDLEWOOD SUITES



SHOPPING CENTERS

- S-1: SHOPPES AT PARK PLACE
- S-2: CITY CENTRE PLAZA
- S-3: CITY CENTRE II
- S-4: EVERGREEN ATRIUM MARKETPLACE
- S-5: TGI FRIDAYS
- S-6: TRAVELERS TERRACE RETAIL CENTER
- S-7: KERBY'S KONEY ISLAND
- S-8: WENDY'S



HISTORIC SITES

- HS-1: SOUTHFIELD REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
- HS-2: MARY THOMPSON FARM
- HS-3: SOUTHFIELD CITY HALL
- HS-4: FORMER FEDERAL-MOGUL BUILDING
- HS-5: SOUTHFIELD TOWNSHIP CEMETERY
- HS-6: BURGH HISTORICAL PARK
- HS-7: CODE HOUSE



ART

- A-1: BOY AND BEAR
- A-2: PROPHET
- A-3: PEACOCK
- A-4: PIONEER FAMILY II
- A-5: DIVERSITY
- A-6: GRATITUDE
- A-7: MOBY-DICK
- A-8: RED POLE PARK



Trail Head
or End Point



Parking



Restrooms



Bike Repair
Station

Completed Shared
- Use Path

Proposed Shared
- Use Path (2020)

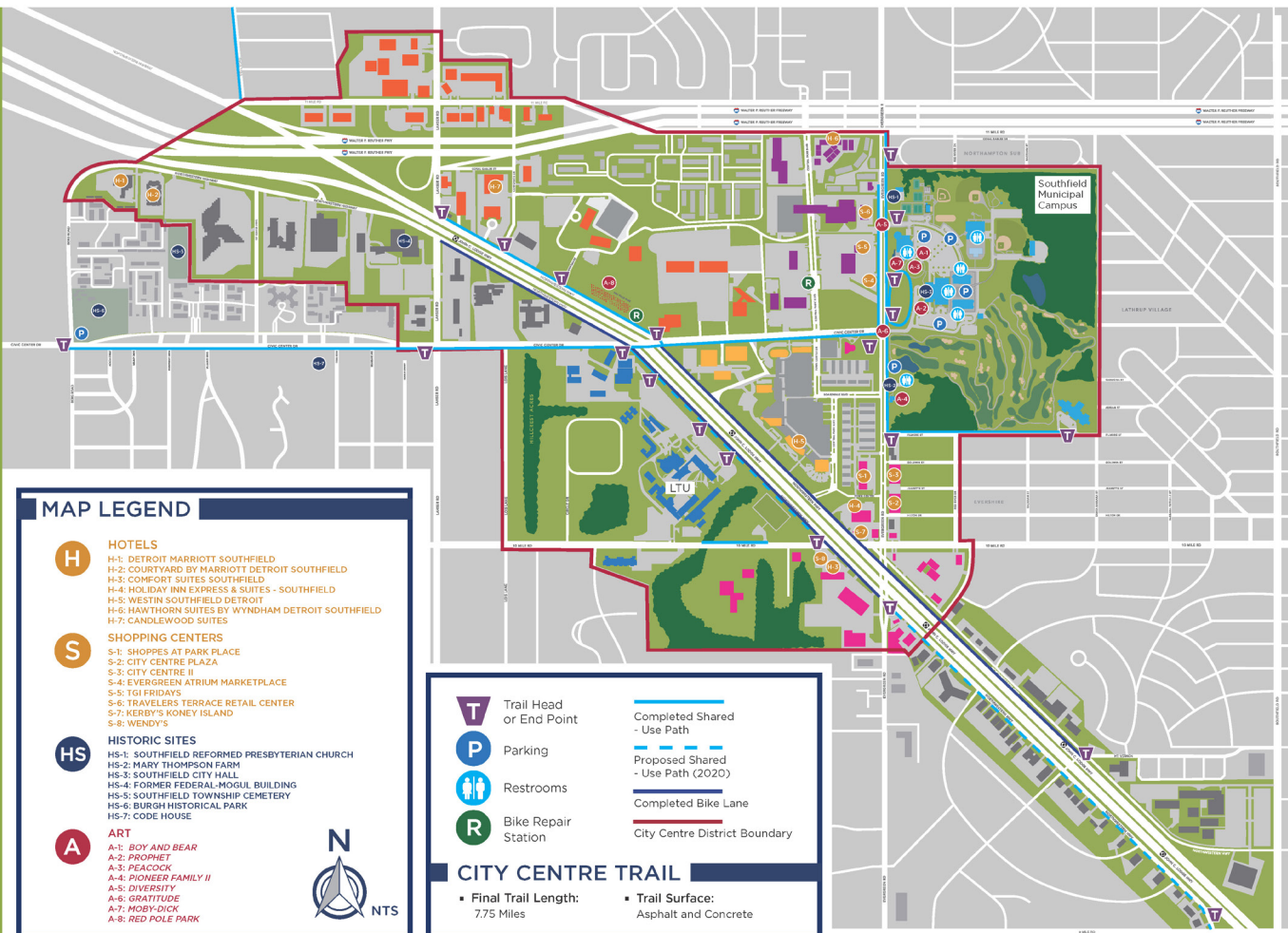
Completed Bike Lane

City Centre District Boundary

CITY CENTRE TRAIL

Final Trail Length:
7.75 Miles

Trail Surface:
Asphalt and Concrete



CREATING CONNECTIONS IN THE SOUTHFIELD CITY CENTRE

Claire Charlton

The Southfield City Centre is a 1.766-square mile mixed-use district situated within Southfield, a first-ring suburb of Detroit that was, in height of vehicle-centric prosperity of the 1960 and 70's, considered the fastest-growing city in Michigan. Until recently, the district had an outdated land-use design that ignored the needs of pedestrians, providing, at best, a fragmented system of sidewalks too narrow to accommodate both foot traffic and cyclists. In areas not serviced by sidewalks, "goat paths" appeared from persistent trudging feet and bicycle wheels, indicating a desire and need for space to traverse.

For the elderly or persons with disabilities, however, the area was impassable. Students and staff from Lawrence Technological University (LTU) and businesses risked peril or used a vehicle to access restaurants and amenities that were well within walking distance.

In 2016, in support of "Sustainable Southfield," the city's master plan, community members shared priorities of connectivity and walkability and the business community requested help to attract and retain young professionals seeking an alternative to a traditional downtown work environment. The goal was to reimagine the city center as more than a thriving business district — but

an urban center on a human scale, with opportunities for walking, meeting, sitting and communing with nature.

"Our trail system is unique because it was not developed along a river or as part of a rails-to-trails development. It's along an expressway service drive in an urban corridor, which is unusual," says Terry Croad, AICP, ASLA, director of planning for the City of Southfield. "But it was created out of real need for a place for people to experience nature and connect with others while getting heart-healthy activity during their day. It's an important story to tell."

The design's backbone is a main greenway spine, enhanced in two segments (north: Phase I, and south: Phase II) that each provide walking circuits, connected by wide shared-use paths, with spurs that take non-motorized traffic in several directions throughout the district. The main greenway — 2.75 miles of connected path — links in to a full 7.75-mile system, when complete. The final segment of this trail is fully funded and scheduled for completion in fall 2020.

"We knew this design was an opportunity to increase the awareness of what a special place Southfield is," says Mark Heiber, ASLA, LEED AP, principal landscape architect with design firm HED. "One thing that everyone knew about Southfield is that you can get anywhere in a car. What wasn't so apparent is how you do it as a pedestrian. We knew we needed to play up the identity of this new connector for pedestrians in a way that everyone could understand it was there."

(Left) The Southfield City Centre Advisory Board produces a detailed trail map and brochure (third edition) with amenities likes public art, bike-share stations, and businesses highlighted. Image Source: LittleFish Think Tank



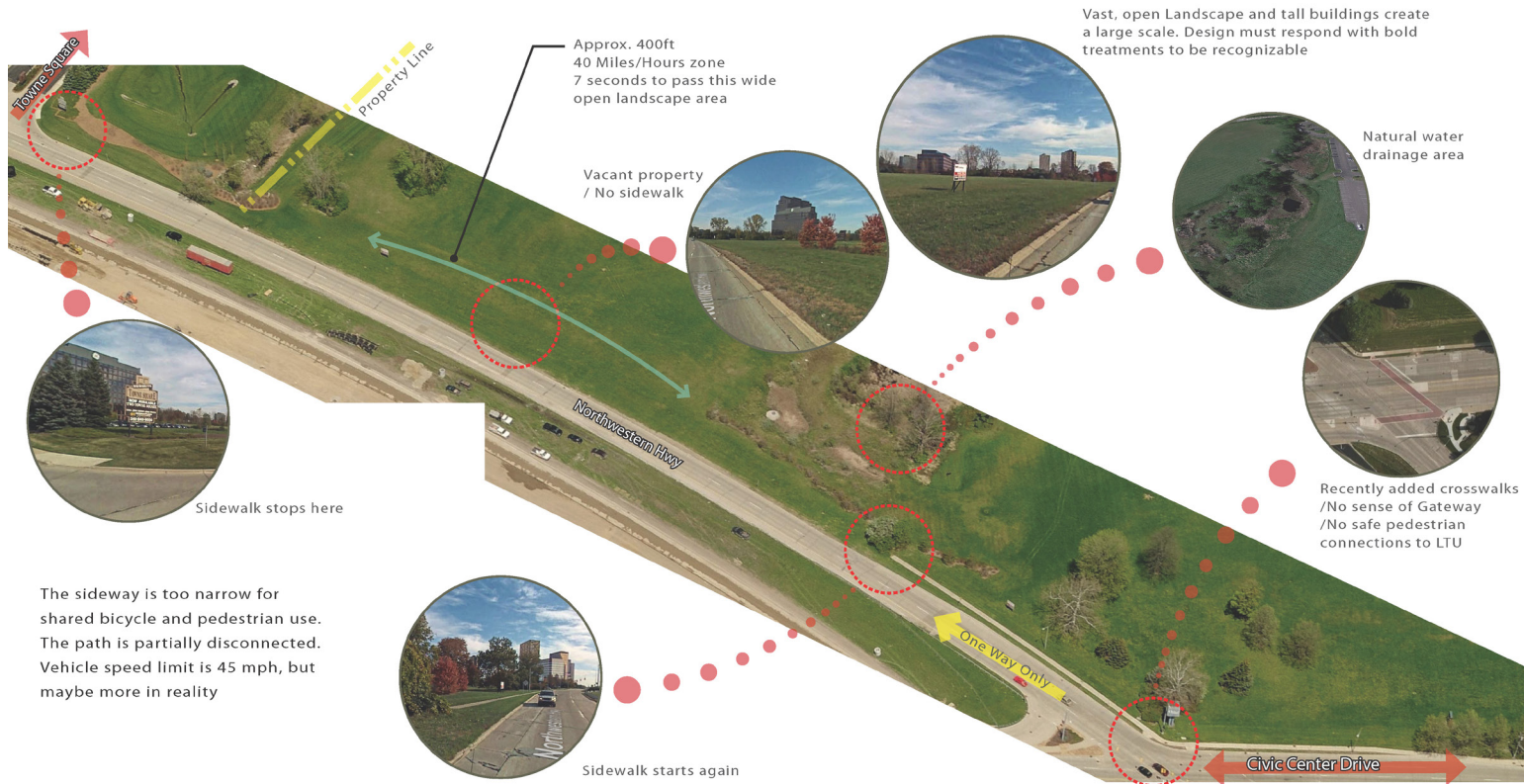
A UNIQUE SHARED-USE TRAIL

Integral to the design is creative placemaking in the form of wayfinding, benches, bikeshare stations and art installations on a grand scale. Interactive elements including outdoor interpretive rooms with stewardship-building information panels, eclectic birdhouses, bike repair stations and affirmative “You Can!” signs are scattered along the path.

The trail has stimulated economic growth in the district, as entities seek to build on the beauty and functionality of the site. Along the north segment, adjacent to a landmark interactive art installation called Red Pole Park, a small events center opened, two hotels are scheduled to be built within the next year, and automotive supplier Clariance Technologies has built its global headquarters here. The mid-segment, which runs adjacent to LTU, connects the main campus to a newly built athletic complex, which sparks engagement with the local community, especially with its growing varsity football program. A new residence hall was also planned and built with the trail in mind.

“This is a natural area on the branch of the Rouge River that cuts through the campus. The university wanted this portion of the trail to be least intrusive to the environment as possible. So, we designed the path to meander its way through trees and at the [Evans] drain crossing we retained the natural area that exists there,” explains Rhett Gronevelt, PE, principal with OHM Advisors, which provided civil engineering services for a portion of the trail project. “There is not a lot of room between edge of the road and the drain culvert, so we had to build a retaining wall and the city wanted to make it aesthetically pleasing for trail users to stop and look at the creek.” The city worked with OHM to select a palette of attractive materials, rather than poured concrete for the protective barrier. “That location was the most unique design challenge of this portion of the project,” he says.

(Left) By welcoming birds and providing Instagram-worthy placemaking opportunities, ornate, whimsical birdhouses serve several purposes along the trail. Image Source: Echo Media



(Above) Before Phase I improvements, the corridor was a series of disconnected, narrow sidewalks linked by goat paths, impassable for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Image Source: HED



BUILT IN TIME TO MAXIMIZE A CHANGING SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

A public-private partnership made this project possible through combined financial resources of SEMCOG FY 2019 TAP grant funding, LTU and the Southfield City Centre Advisory Board, a business organization established as a principal shopping district that supports pedestrian improvements in the corridor. This type of project typically wouldn't have a dedicated funding source, Gronevelt says. "As a firm, we have observed how much the public recognizes the value of outdoor public spaces, including pathways, and especially during COVID-19," he says.

The Southfield City Centre Trail has transformed formerly pedestrian-hostile land into a vista for cyclists, dog-walkers, strollers, joggers, wheelchairs, wagons and more. Now, people can easily walk where they never could before and, with the coronavirus pandemic, have even more reason to do so.

"When people see something as a safe place, they want to be outside where they can move and see the landscape and walk and bike, even more so right now with the coronavirus pandemic," Heiber says. "This project provides that opportunity, and it puts into people's minds that there is a place here that is convenient and enjoyable, off the street and wide enough to be used safely by pedestrians and bicyclists." •

Claire Charlton is a freelance writer and editor who specializes in features, profiles, and writing on health and wellness.

(Left) With Red Pole Park in the foreground, the winding north segment welcomes pedestrians, cyclists, dog-walkers, strollers and more. Image Source: Southfield Multimedia Services



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LA RIDE: DETROIT MONTH OF DESIGN 2020

Bob Ford | LAP INC.

The LA Ride, Detroit Month of Design 2020, Cycle Tour defied COVID-19 pandemic expectations and went off without a hitch on September 26. Over 80 riders participated in a loop tour covering approximately 12 miles of Detroit and producing many smiles. Landscape architects Keenan Gibbons, PLA of Smith Group; Burke Jenkins, PLA of PEA Group; Derrik Dykas, Founder of Community Push; John DeRuiter and Arianna Zannetti of City of Detroit; Raymond Lozano of Mexicantown Community Development Corporation; Manuel Martinez, PLA of Christman Company; Stacey Tobar of Giffles and Webster; and Dale Hughes of Detroit Fitness Center/Lexus Velodrome, conducted eight separate lectures on sites they had a direct hand in creating through design, funding, and/or coordination.

Landscape Architecture Rides are slow- to medium-paced, experiential bicycle tours of award-winning or emerging sites hosted by landscape architects, designers, and support agencies. These include urban parks, plazas, streetscapes, urban waterfronts, historic places, redevelopment districts, trails, campuses, transportation corridors, and green infrastructure designed and artistically enhanced by landscape architects. This year we were escorted by

the “D-Town Bicycle Club,” a local bicycle group, who have been providing this type of service since 2006. Their knowledge of the area, and the playing of some soothing tunes, made the ride easy to navigate and created a relaxed and more enjoyable atmosphere.

This was our 5th “Education in Motion” LA Ride, Cycle Tour Experience. The ride was in cooperation with “Detroit Month of Design 2020” (DMD), which was celebrating its 10th anniversary. Kiana Wenzell, Director of Community & Culture, said, “We were really excited to have landscape architects participate in our festival once again. It really helped to broaden the base of design professions that represent the Detroit Month of Design and its diversity.” Detroit is the only city in America recognized by UNESCO, which is comprised of 30 countries using creativity as a driver of long-term equitable development. In addition to the “live ride,” a virtual tour was developed so anyone can take the virtual ride by downloading the “pocket sites app.” This allows people to carry the app with them as they ride the route alone or with a group of their choice. Another option is to simply view the event at www.laridecycletours.com.

COVID-19 posed a significant concern this year, so all precautions were taken by closely following CDC’s recommendations. The pandemic forced Michigan ASLA and National ASLA to cancel most of their regular gatherings, conferences, and outings that normally occur throughout the year. Joane Slusky, President of Michigan ASLA said, “The LA Ride helped the executive committee save the

(Left) Over 80 riders were led around Detroit’s iconic sites including the Dequindre Cut. Image Source: Bob Ford



annual program that was held in abeyance due to COVID. It also provided the executive committee renewed enthusiasm while planning three webinars, an awards program, and trivia night.” It was this combination of lectures that provided a substitute for the traditional way of conducting the Michigan ASLA 2020 annual meeting, amid the pandemic of 2020. Maybe it wasn’t the normal, but it was certainly innovative, educational, and an interesting diversion.

The route of the LA Ride this year visited the following:

- Tolan Park
- Dequindre Cut
- Detroit Riverfront
- DTE, Riverside Park
- Bagley Bridge
- Mexicantown Revedelopment
- Michigan Train Station
- Lexus Velodrone

The 80+ riders were a mix of professional landscape architects, designers, artists, professors, planners, students, associates, and friends. I heard one person say, “It was a wonderful way to experience Detroit. I would not have ever thought to do this on my own.” When asked what she had learned, Ann Clayton said, “I had no idea that there was a state park in Del Ray under the Ambassador Bridge, which is a great use of the land and was obviously being enjoyed by many Detroit residents.” Greg Pratt said, “It shows me that Detroit is becoming a destination city, and I saw things that I expect to see in other cities that I vacation at.” Another testimony was from Charlotte Rupper who said, “The sites we saw around Detroit today were so exciting and cool. Places like the Dequindre Cut and the renovation of the Michigan Train Station. These things demonstrated to me how much thought goes into the wonderful things that are happening in Detroit and where it is headed in the near future.” Finally, Marc Dutton said, “The LA Ride was informative, educational and a really wonderful time. I really liked the Detroit Waterfront and how they improved that area along with Riverside Park and how the skating area was so heavily used. I definitely will be

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This year, the D-Town Bicycle Club served as tour escorts (top left), and the tour ended with visiting the Lexus Velodrone and learning about its sustainable site (bottom left). Images Source: Bob Ford

riding next year in Traverse City.”

Our six annual co-sponsor partners include:

- Victor Stanley
- ANOVA
- Oaks Landscape Products
- Landscape Forms
- Rain Bird Irrigation
- Unilock

Other Ride Guide Sponsors included:

- Mark Dutton Irrigation Inc.
- Messenger Printing
- Cycle Safe
- KAK and KAK Non-Profit
- Christman Company
- SmithGroup
- Williams and Works
- HWLA
- PEA Group
- Spartan Irrigation
- Braincell
- Attorney-at-Law John Liskey

Thanks also goes to Pete Bosheff from “Street Level” and Daniel Strauss from Strauss House Productions for capturing the LA Ride in digital form. This will be the first LA Ride “pocket sites” production. A video is also being produced that can be downloaded and viewed by anyone. It will be available for viewing to the 30 countries that DMD is in partnership with through UNESCO.

We were also very fortunate to have LA Program Director Ming Han Li from Michigan State University and Chet Hill Michigan ASLA Trustee speak at “The Launch” of the LA Ride. Both gave a good understanding of what landscape architecture entails and what a career might look like for students of the future. Bob Ford, Past President and Past Trustee for the ASLA and founder of the LA Ride served as the MC and provided comments about how the LA Ride is one way to advocate for the LA profession in a tangible way and how it can be used as a method of outreach to help to inform the public and educate younger people about the profession. In this way potential students, especially in cities,

Stops on the tour also included Mexicantown in Southeast Detroit (top right) and the Detroit Riverfront (bottom right). Images Source: Bob Ford



can become aware of career paths in design that they might not otherwise know about. This exposure is referred to as “on-ramps”, a term that is being used by DMD in their publications and practices to invite young people and people who need assistance to investigate and learn about the design professions and see if it is a good fit for them to pursue. The LA Ride generated over \$2,000 after all expenses were paid, to Michigan ASLA for its distribution. President Slusky indicated that these funds and potential other funds that Michigan ASLA controls will be used for scholarships to minority students who are in need of educational assistance.

We want to thank our sponsors very much. Without their support the ride would not be possible. A big thank you goes to our speakers who volunteered their time and expertise in describing their masterpieces so we could learn what it takes to create these beautiful public spaces. In addition, we want to thank DMD who invited the landscape architecture profession to join in the Detroit Month of Design and provided the potential to expose landscape architecture to portions of the world. Others who helped manage the ride included D-Town Bike Club, Todd Scott from the Detroit Greenways Coalition, “LAP + Creative”, Michigan ASLA, Design Core Detroit, City of Detroit Parks & Recreation Division, The League of Michigan Bicyclists, and of course all of the executive board members and volunteers from the Michigan Chapter of ASLA. •



(Top Right). Guest speakers present at Riverside Park.
Image Source: Bob Ford

(Bottom Right): The LA Ride also presents opportunities of engagement and education for the community through its principles. Image Source: Bob Ford



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CCC BIG BAY — PART III

Recollections of Life in the Big Bay, Michigan Camp of the Civilian Conservation Corps (1935-1936) | JOHN O. SIMONDS

This excerpt was published with permission from the John Ormsbee Simonds Collection, University of Florida. Visit Michigan ASLA's website to read the previous excerpts found in MiSITES Issue 1 and 2. Also, a special thanks to Bill Sanders, ASLA of Green Garden, Michigan, for sharing Simonds' memoir and the fascinating history of the Big Bay CCC with MiSITES and our readers.

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(Continued from MiSITES Vol. 14 Iss. 2)

SPIDER

Sherm Tissue at the opposite end of bunks from mine was an odd looking number. An experienced logger, he was half French and half Canadian. His head looked like a chestnut burr, with a squirrel mouth and two projecting teeth. He was hunchbacked besides. He was noted throughout the region for a particular skill — which we will come back to later.

When you saw a twinkle in his eyes — which was often — you'd know he was plotting another surprise for one or more of his comrades. One such surprise I remember very well. Somehow he had stupified a half dozen or so wasps and poked them into a matchbox. This in turn he poked into the toe of my boot one night when I was sleeping.

Next morning was memorable. I took at least two whaps on my ankle. Morse, in the bunk next to mine, got a big welt on his ear. This was good because he knew who had done it, and he gave me some valuable information. He happened to tell me that Tissue, the sinner, had once said that the only thing in the woods of which he was afraid was spiders.

Thinking long and hard about this, I noticed that the fiberboard squares of the ceiling over our bunks had an edge that ran directly from mine to Tissue's. With small eye hooks running along the crack, and a threaded fishing line, I could lower a spider directly onto his pillow. All that was needed was a suitable spider that weighed enough.

From an old inner tube at the toolshed I cut a dozen or so thin "spider legs" a foot or more in length. These were fastened to a heavy lead sinker from my tackle box and tied to the end of the line. It tested out perfectly — especially since the table lamps focused down and left the ceiling in a shadow.

That night, when all should have been asleep I payed the line out slowly 'til it stopped. Then from Tissue we heard a series of unearthly screams . . .

"Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! Aughhhhht!" The biggest goddamn spider in the world!!!! And it probably was.

FLAG

The trucks were in and we were scraping and racking our tools when someone let out a shout. There, staggering into camp was a wounded fawn — shot high in the front leg, with hide hanging bloody and loose. She collapsed as we gathered around and sent for the visiting Doc who was there on his rounds. He checked her out.

"Shot from the front by a #22, I'd guess. Nicked a vein and tore some hide loose but luckily shattered no bone." He cleaned the wound, even sewing the torn hide back in place, and bound the leg tightly with gauze and tape. During the ordeal, she let us hold her without a struggle. Then, with her loss of blood she

lay with her eyes closed, hardly breathing.

Doc said, "I saw a bottle of peach brandy in Emblad's office. Go get it." We did. He poured a splash on the back of his hand and held it under her nose. The fawn took a lick, rolled her eyes, and then opened them wide for more.

"What we have," said the Doc, "is a patient that will be O.K. — but a confirmed alcoholic."

Walt Meskit, the toolman, broke open a bale of salt hay at the back of the storage shed and made the fawn a bed in the far corner. That was her home from then on. He'd lock her in at night to protect her from dogs or a possible bear. In the mornings, before daylight, he would let her out. Soon she learned to streak for the cookhouse door where she knew would be waiting a fresh loaf of cornbread set out with a half bucket of milk. For the rest of the day she browsed within sight in the lush cover at the edge of the slashings.

It wasn't as though she had no name. The problem was that she had too many. Some of the CC's names her after their mother or a favorite sister — others for someone else left behind. There were even fights about it but no one won. I called her "Flag", because of her white bushy tail she would raise as she came trotting when anybody called her, no matter what name they used.

She was a moocher. Every night when the trucks came in she was there to greet us. With her hooves on the lowered window she would roll out her tongue to receive her favorite gift — a cigarette, or any part thereof. Those of the crew who smoked carried an extra tobacco can in which they saved butts or any fallen scraps dropped in the rolling. It had become a ritual — as had the presence and greeting of the beloved yearling.

*(Right) Crew member installing bridge posts at the lower end of the lake.
Image Source: John Ormsbee Simonds Collection, University of Florida*



It was in late spring when it happened. The snow and ice had melted to the point where tracking was impossible. Yet when the trucks pulled in with no waiting friend in sight we all piled out to form a huge circle looking for outward-leading hoof or footprints.

It is hard to imagine the sense of loss and anger that swept over our camp. Supper that night was an uproar. In the CC mess hall nothing else was talked about. Then someone remembered a bow hunter in town who furnished out-of-season game for the tables of some clubs and restaurants in Marquette. Since no shot had been heard that day, the suspicion centered on the bow hunter.

Supper finished with the CC's taking off for town to find the culprit. He was nowhere around, and lucky for him. He was never seen in Big Bay again. Nor was Flag ever seen again at the cookhouse door — or waiting at the truck windows. Camp was never the same.

THE VISITORS

It was after lunch break when the truck driver and hauled the tractor back to camp from the Marquette Park site to have a plate rewelded. As we opened the door to the hoist shed, we could hear a moaning and sobbing in the darkened corner. With the door open wide, we could see a young Indian girl of about twelve and what looked to be her brother, a couple of years older. He was hurt bad on the head, shoulder, and upper arm. He groaned and spoke no word — but the girl excitedly pointed to the cookshed and yelled, "He! He! He!"

First things first. The driver and I got the boy to the foremen's barracks and sat him down to treat him from the medicine cabinet. It was surely not a "pro" job, but we staunchly the bleeding and even fashioned a split where the arm felt most comfortable.

By that time the work crews were getting back — all to become angry that a man countless mangle a young guy so. The cook was sent for and when he saw what his helper had done, he fired him on the spot.

There had been provocation. The two visitors had been there before with a well-worked-out scheme of thievery. The girl would sneak into the mess hall and empty the salt shakers into a bag and then go to the door and yammer for the cook's helper to give chase. She could outrun him easily. In the meantime the boy would hide by the cook house door. While the cooks were distracted he'd scoop up a canful of bacon grease from the tub and take off in another direction.

This time the helper had seen them coming and was waiting for the boy to come. He said he would kill him. He almost did.

The cook felt so badly about the way things had gone he went back to the cookhouse, cleaned and scalded out two one-gallon syrup cans. One he filled with table salt and the other with melted bacon grease. These he brought back and set on the floor by the wounded boy. "The table salt comes by the barrel," he told us, "and we throw away bacon grease every day. Aside from berries these people have nothing to eat all year except meat, fish, eggs, greens and roots. Imagine how flat they must taste without cooking grease or a little salt! I'd steal it myself if I had to. Tell him there's more here when he needs it."

In time I was to learn much more of the boy and his sister.

There were few Indians in Big Bay or the region around us. Those who had populated the territory before — the Chippewas — had not long ago been driven northward by the buffalo hunting Sioux and Cheyenne of the plains and by the intruding settlers. Further, by command of the faithless, often murderous government, they had been forced onto nearby reservations with little chance of earning a livelihood on the once rich but now barren, burned over, hunting lands. The father of the young camp marauders had been a Chippewa chief. Driven with his depleted and miserable tribe to a nearby reservation — he had taken to the bottle and died in poverty and shame.

Contrary to regulation, his squaw, fearing the same dismal life for her son, had decided to leave the reservation and set up somewhere an isolated camp where she and her family might preserve some of the life and traditions she had

known. With unusual luck she had found a site and long-abandoned trapper's cabin not many miles from Big Bay, deep within a forested pocket of the near-impenetrable Huron Mountains and besides a falling stream. A sagging corner of the cabin roof had been replaced by the upper half of the old chief's teepee — with some of its faded war scenes still showing. It provided light to the cabin while permitting the cooking smoke to space. To get it, the squaw and family had gone back to the reservation the first winter to borrow dogs to haul the sound top of the teepee and poles over the rocky ground and snow.

It was late in the summer when the Indian boy and his sister showed up in our camp again. They were waiting in front of the tool shed and had with them the two shiny cans — one for salt and one for melted cooking grease. They had also brought a folded buckskin packet which they had laid out on the flat fender of a truck. In the packet were arrow and spear heads such as I'd never seen before. Back in Niles, Michigan, when a boy I had followed the spring plowing around the site of the old "Four Flags Fort" on the St. Joseph River to pick up shards or broken bits of old arrows. But these seen today, although found in the earth or dug from old trees — were complete, tooled from flint or agate with artistry. We were to take our choice — the cook, the truck driver, Emblad, and I. Other foremen or CC's gathered around were soon making offers for these rare north Michigan souvenirs. There are also bracelets or semi-precious stones or beads, and a soft deerskin blouse trimmed with Martin fur. Within an hour, they had all been purchased.

Soon after, that fall, I was to leave camp to resume my studies. Two Indian friends, and very successful traders, were among those I must leave behind.

ICE FISHING

The big thermometer bolted to the tractor shed could register no lower than -20° F. This was a standing joke in camp because when winter set in that's where weather started. -40° was common without a wind chill factor, which then nobody knew about. Sometimes on a still day, it seemed that the air had frozen into a solid, icy block. When a nor'wester roared in across Superior every living creature took cover.

It was a rule of camp that at -20° the crews and trucks stayed in. That's when I went out if it happened during the week, for that's when I could use the fishing shanty of a friend who lived and worked in Marquette.

The shanty, along with dozens of others was dragged out onto the ice over the shallow waters of Lake Independence. The bottom was sandy there and laced with pickerel weed which attracted minnows and larger game fish. These could be speared through a hole chopped in the ice.

The shanties were square at the base, each side the width of a tarpaper roll. They had a door but no windows for it was the light of the sun on the surrounding ice that illuminated the lake bottom, snails, clams, crawfish and whatever came passing through. Heat in the shanty was provided by burning chips of wood in a one-gallon paint can. Smoke escaped through a small hole in the roof.

So there one sat on a cut of firewood with a three-tined spear poised over the hole while one jigged various colored lures at various depths in the water. Occasionally a northern pike or muskelunge would burst through — some much too large to retrieve even if one were lucky enough to snag it. Mostly it was panfish, perch, or walleyes which were plentiful.

On this bitter day as the wind howled around, I sat snug inside spearing plenty of fish for a foremen's fish dinner. As they were pulled from the spear and tossed outside they froze instantly into a curve with their mouths gaping open. When my bag of heating chips was used up, I decided to gather up and go home. The fish were strung on a line through their gills and tied to one end of the spear for carrying.

It was a long trudge across the windy lake to where I had left the road. I had seen no one else all day, nor did I now. Even though it was growing dark, I stopped to rest in the lee of a vacant shack. That's the last thing remember until I woke next day in camp. Then I was told of my good luck.

Tired and sleepy as I was, I had staggered out to the road where I fell unconscious. Not long after, a teamster on his way to Big Bay had his sledge

stop for some reason. He got out with a lantern, saw me lying at the horses' feet, loaded me on the sledge and brought me into camp. There I was surrounded by men who knew what to do with freezing and frostbite if they could catch it in time.

They stripped off my clothes and laid my stiffening body in a bank of soft snow outside our barracks door. They covered me with a blanket which they doused with ice water. Then patiently they dripped ice water from buckets on the white frost bites where they appeared on my nose, ears, and cheeks. Freezing or frozen bodies of flesh must be thawed very gradually or else the cells burst and gangrene usually follows.

They told me that when my body began to respond, I was dried, bundled into blankets, and laid in an unheated storage room. All during the night the foremen took turns dripping ice water on the white frost spots until color returned. It was a week or more before I could work again.

That was some 70 years and several bouts of minor surgery ago — with few complications. For this I must be thankful to knowing, caring friends — and a team of horses.

FOREMEN

To understand how the CCC worked one must understand the foremen. For the most part, they were experts in their various fields, near retirement age, out of work, and needing employment. At Big Bay each was engaged to direct a project crew and teach the members a skill. In the CCC across the country they provided an enormous reservoir of knowledge and effective leadership — as their completed works still demonstrate.

Those in our group were a varied lot — starting with logger Sherm Tissue. McGinty, a bull-necked Irishman, was a construction contractor — mostly buildings of varying sizes and types. Road construction was the work of Neil, who until recently had been a top engineer for a huge copper mining company. Another was an expert in the use of mechanical equipment — from tumble

buckets to tractor-cranes. Morse was the seasoned fire fighter and trail builder. Dan oversaw the small fleet of trucks — their assignment, use, and care. Chuck and his crew looked to the protection and care of the forest, its lakes, and streams.

The only one among us who talked much of our past was Chuck. This was not to be expected since, aside from his love of the natural world, he was a professional gambler. We never did learn the circumstances of his being hired in the CCC — but he was eager to show his way with cards, which was amazing.

For eight such disparate guys in a barracks we were surprisingly compatible. One bonding took place after our trucks were all in, and we were washed for supper. It was then, every night, we opened and shared a bottle of Kessler whiskey. More than a social event it was a test of manhood. We drank from the bottle. This was neat but it had its disadvantages. For one, Sherm Tissue, by seniority, had first swig. He usually had a “chaw” in his mouth, which he pushed to one side as he drank. As the bottle went around, each guy in turn would wipe off the neck with the sleeve of his jacket. At the end of the line, I could detect the contributions of other tobacco chews, snuff, and pipe smoke. I have yet to savor the unenhanced flavor of Kesslers.

Sherm Tissue! One might think this repulsive old coot would be a misfit, but on the contrary, his enthusiasm for the barracks life was catching. He once gave me a very old hunting knife that he'd found. It was ploughed out of the ground by the butt of a large log he was working. He knew that I'd like it because of its unusual form and age. The bone handle was carved with strange symbols. Blade and guard were deeply corroded but with Walt Meskit's help, they were secured and the pitted blade sharpened to a fair cutting edge. We all felt it to be a museum piece. If I still had it somewhere and knew where it was — it would now be one of my most prized possessions.

Of such give and take were bondings formed. Evening games, too. After the Spring thaw and blackly season ended, we spent waning daylight with the crew at pick-up baseball, volleyball, or horseshoes. Then inside for the nightly game

of cribbage — one on one — with an Eskimo Pie to the winner.

I liked best to play against Chuck, the gambler. It was beautiful to see him shuffle, deal, and control the deck. He always gave me a handicap of one row and usually beat me. Sometimes he would announce that he planned to cheat and would give me a two row advantage. If I caught him I would win, but I never did.

I remember Chuck best for one weekend day in the Spring when he took me fly fishing on the Lake Superior shore. He had observed that this was the time when the speckled trout were migrating from lake to stream. It was a calm, sunny day. As we watched, schools of 10 to 12" brook trout drifted scattered shadows on the sloping granite sheets that extended far out from the shoreline.

I had never fished with flies before, but Chuck gave me a spare rod he had repaired and several small black flies for the brim of my hat. If one were dropped lightly at the edge of the school, there would be an explosion of flying water and a wildly looping fly rod. Before we left we each had a limit for our creels and for the foremen a memorable brook trout feed.

I started out to describe CCC foremen. I didn't get far but perhaps far enough. As a national cadre they were first of all such talented and admirable humans.

LEAVING

Leaving the Big Bay CCC camp after a year, for an opportunity to continue my schooling, was one of the saddest days of my life. •



(Top right) John Simons with Ted Osmundson. Image Source: TCLF.org



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