

WEBVTT

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00:00:03.700 --> 00:00:08.000

Carolyn / SPUR: Hi, everyone welcome. We'll give it a minute for people to come in before we get started.

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00:00:38.490 --> 00:00:39.160

Hello!

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00:00:57.470 --> 00:00:58.210

Carolyn / SPUR: Awesome!

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00:00:59.480 --> 00:01:04.900

Carolyn / SPUR: Alright! Hi! Everyone welcome. Thank you for joining us for this for digital discourse today.

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00:01:04.950 --> 00:01:19.900

Carolyn / SPUR: My name is Carolyn Chung, and I'm a senior public engagement associate here at Spur. Many of you here are spur members. So thank you so much for your support. If you're not a member, I encourage you to join to support Spur's ongoing work in using education.

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00:01:19.930 --> 00:01:28.220

Carolyn / SPUR: policy, analysis, and advocacy to make our regions and cities more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable places to live.

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00:01:28.300 --> 00:01:34.199

Carolyn / SPUR: Your financial support enables us to continue our work, including the hosting of programs like to day's.

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00:01:34.270 --> 00:01:43.329

Carolyn / SPUR: You'll find more information about membership online@spurt.org slash join. We also have another digital discourse coming up next week

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00:01:43.780 --> 00:01:53.120

Carolyn / SPUR: on the eighteenth, on October eighteenth, joined spur and partnership for the Bay's future, for a forum exploring the critical role that community involvement

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00:01:53.160 --> 00:01:58.059

Carolyn / SPUR: plays in the creation of policies for equitable or equitable housing solutions.

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00:01:58.110 --> 00:02:05.190

Carolyn / SPUR: we will examine best practices and identify obstacles for engaging with the community. We will drop the link. Later in the chat

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00:02:06.420 --> 00:02:11.190

Carolyn / SPUR: to day's digital discourse is called catalyzing river fronts for city activation.

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00:02:11.840 --> 00:02:19.519

Carolyn / SPUR: Historically, cities around the world have emerged alongside rivers for their access to water, trade and travel.

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00:02:19.780 --> 00:02:23.180

Carolyn / SPUR: Now cities are reimagining what the riverfronts could look like.

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00:02:23.260 --> 00:02:33.460

Carolyn / SPUR: sites for nature, recreation, housing, innovative public design, and an opportunity to reenergize public spaces and bring communities together.

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00:02:33.610 --> 00:02:43.710

Carolyn / SPUR: Come, learn about how cities across the country are embarking on the reimagining of their riverfronts, and how they're leveraging these generational investments in civic infrastructure.

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00:02:43.750 --> 00:02:58.170

Carolyn / SPUR: To uplift communities and create approaches to public space, government and management during today's Q. And A, we want this to be an interactive conversation and plan and spending as much time possible engaging with all of you.

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00:02:58.230 --> 00:03:07.869

Carolyn / SPUR: So I encourage you all to use a chat box to share your thoughts with each others and with the speakers. If you have any questions, please send those through the Q. And a panel

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00:03:07.940 --> 00:03:15.589

Carolyn / SPUR: from your laptop. It should appear as a button at the bottom of your screen, and if you are using your mobile app, then it'll show up at the top of your screen.

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00:03:15.640 --> 00:03:19.469

Carolyn / SPUR: Within the next few days we'll be sharing a copy of the recording

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00:03:19.480 --> 00:03:22.799

Carolyn / SPUR: Transcript and chat with everyone who registered.

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00:03:23.090 --> 00:03:29.790

Carolyn / SPUR: Now I'll turn it over to Erica pinto spurs, housing, and planning manager to get us started and to introduce our speakers.

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00:03:30.840 --> 00:03:57.859

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Thanks, Carolyn, and welcome everyone. We have a wonderful program lined up for today that takes us to Memphis and Detroit. Rural efforts in these 2 cities have led to an enormous transformation in the past few years. So let's introduce our guests, for today we have Mark Pascoe and Mary Howlett joining us from Detroit and Carol Coletta and George Abbott joining us from Memphis. Mark has been in his role as Director of Communications for the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. For 11 years

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00:03:57.860 --> 00:04:10.010

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Mark has over 30 years of experience in the Communications field, and is responsible for overseeing all of the public relations, media relations, and marketing efforts of the Conservancy.

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00:04:10.230 --> 00:04:33.980

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Mary Howlett is a more recent addition to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, filling the new role of marketing manager. Mary is responsible for spearheading the Conservancy's marketing and community outreach initiatives prior to joining the Conservancy in February of this year Mary worked in communications at the Gross Point public school system, and has over a decade of experience in advertising, marketing and communications.

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00:04:34.580 --> 00:04:45.639

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Carol Coletta is a President and CEO of Memphis River Park partnership, a public private partnership that works with and for the people of Memphis to trigger the transformative power of the River.

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00:04:45.670 --> 00:04:59.640

Erika Pinto / SPUR: She has extensive experience in the making and remaking of civic assets, including heading the Mayor's Institute on City Design, Ceos for cities, art, Place, America, and community and national inti initiatives of the Knight

Foundation.

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00:04:59.990 --> 00:05:07.989

Erika Pinto / SPUR: She came to the partnership as a loan executive from the Kresge Foundation, where she was a senior fellow in the American cities practice.

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00:05:08.000 --> 00:05:12.129

Erika Pinto / SPUR: She was also the instigator of the reimagining the Civic Commons movement.

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00:05:12.940 --> 00:05:27.970

Erika Pinto / SPUR: and last, but not least, we have George Abbott, who is the Director of External Affairs for Memphis River Park's partnership. Previously he has served as the National Program director for the Knight Foundation, including some time as program director in San Jose.

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00:05:28.150 --> 00:05:32.839

Erika Pinto / SPUR: originally from the United Kingdom. George moved to the US. In 2,012,

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00:05:33.300 --> 00:05:44.890

Erika Pinto / SPUR: and with that I will pass it over to Marg and Mary from the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, who will share more about their efforts, and they will be followed by a presentation from Memphis. Thank you.

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00:05:49.150 --> 00:05:50.509

Marc Pasco: Thank you everybody

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00:05:51.950 --> 00:05:59.450

Marc Pasco: whenever you're ready. Caroline and or Erica, if you want to pull up our presentation, we'll get

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00:05:59.790 --> 00:06:01.050

started right away.

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00:06:05.020 --> 00:06:22.620

Marc Pasco: Okay, Mary and I are gonna divide and conquer. I'm gonna do a couple of parts of the presentation, and then return it over to to Mary to talk about a few things as well. What we wanted to do is wanted to provide kind of like an overview of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. What the riverfront used to look like

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00:06:22.790 --> 00:06:36.219

Marc Pasco: and talk a little bit about the the programming that we have, and a look at the future through the lens of how exactly we are are activating these public spaces for people to use.

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00:06:36.750 --> 00:06:38.440

Marc Pasco: So next slide

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00:06:41.550 --> 00:06:44.040

Marc Pasco: the veteran riverfront Conservancy.

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00:06:44.070 --> 00:07:02.089

Marc Pasco: This is our twentieth anniversary. So we've been at it for 20 years. 2,003 is. When we launched we launched with 3 partners the city of Detroit. the Kreskey Foundation, which gave us 50 million dollars to get the the ball rolling, so to speak, and General Motors.

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00:07:02.130 --> 00:07:13.939

Marc Pasco: which just a few years earlier had purchased the Renaissance Center, which is a huge iconic building along the riverfront as their new headquarters. So those were our 3 launching partners 20 years ago.

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00:07:14.190 --> 00:07:18.040

Marc Pasco: We still have a relationship with them to this day. Thankfully.

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00:07:18.400 --> 00:07:36.169

Marc Pasco: City Detroit was very important, instrumental in do infrastructure improvements along the riverfront, and that relocate some existing businesses and take down some businesses that were no longer in existence. I mentioned the Kresge Foundation. They gave us 50 million dollars to get the ball rolling

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00:07:36.240 --> 00:07:47.819

Marc Pasco: and general motors, in addition to redoing practically every square inch of the the Renaissance center. They built a fabulous GM. Plaza

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00:07:47.950 --> 00:07:54.199

Marc Pasco: facing the riverfront, and donated the first half mile of river walk to the Conservancy. So next slide

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00:07:54.670 --> 00:08:05.889

Marc Pasco: our vision then, and our vision now was 5 and a half miles from bridge to bridge. Detroit sits on an international river front to the south of us.

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00:08:06.270 --> 00:08:31.690

Marc Pasco: I know South. I didn't mess that up. It's true. South of us is Canada. The only place in the world where Canada is actually south of the United States. So we have Windsor, Ontario right across the river from us. Our vision. Then, when we launched in 2,003 in our vision now is still the same. It's 5 and a half miles of revitalize riverfront for bridge to bridge the bridge to Canada.

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00:08:31.720 --> 00:08:39.389

Marc Pasco: which is a big bridge. There's a bridge, and there's a tunnel that will take you to to Canada. There's another bridge under development.

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00:08:39.650 --> 00:08:48.970

Marc Pasco: and the bridge to Belle Isle. Belle Isle is kind of kind of like our Central Park, our our 1,000 Acre park within the city, so

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00:08:49.270 --> 00:09:04.219

Marc Pasco: within that 2 bridge span that's about 5 and a half miles. We break it up between the East River front, which is 3 and a half miles long. and the West River front, which is 2 miles long. We're very, very close to finishing our vision for the East River front.

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00:09:04.300 --> 00:09:14.750

Marc Pasco: As a matter of fact, next weekend we will celebrate the completion of that 3 and a half miles. And we're also working on the West, that two-mile connection we're working on that as well.

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00:09:15.320 --> 00:09:16.410

Marc Pasco: Next slide.

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00:09:19.420 --> 00:09:40.690

Marc Pasco: So here I'm going to talk a little bit about our legacy of of transformation, what the riverfront used to look like and what it looks like now. For years and years and years city leaders and residents here in Detroit would look across the river to Canada, which had in Windsor they had a great riverfront. They had events, and they had public arts.

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00:09:40.860 --> 00:09:52.190

Marc Pasco: and you know there was music coming across the river, and just a sense of vibrancy along their river front which we really didn't have. We had cement silos

and and businesses and

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00:09:52.300 --> 00:09:58.619

Marc Pasco: belching smokestacks and things like that. We didn't have the beautiful riverfront that we did that they did

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00:09:58.750 --> 00:10:24.830

Marc Pasco: we wanted it, but it just really didn't happen, and it wasn't until like a year or 2 before the Conservancy launched in 2,003. That the planets really kind of started aligning, and we are able to start making kind of headway on that revitalization of the riverfront. In addition to the cement silos and abandoned lots, it was not only not attractive, there was very little public access. We had this beautiful riverfront

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00:10:24.910 --> 00:10:29.100

Marc Pasco: but very little public access to it. So next slide.

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00:10:31.600 --> 00:10:37.819

Marc Pasco: So we always like to have these photos in our presentations, because it's cliché when people say that

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00:10:37.930 --> 00:10:42.349

Marc Pasco: a picture's worth a thousand words, but but it really is

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00:10:42.770 --> 00:10:54.459

Marc Pasco: worth a thousand words. You know, this is what the riverfront looked like. And some of these photos that you're going to see. Maybe it's how it looked 15 years ago. But in some cases some of these photos are just from a few years ago

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00:10:54.500 --> 00:11:05.329

Marc Pasco: that 20 year transformation that we've been working on has yielded incredible results. So at Water Street is kind of like main drag along the riverfront and

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00:11:05.970 --> 00:11:23.540

Marc Pasco: The city had given up trying to pave it, because all the trucks going up and down it, and and delivering and picking up aggregate to the freighters that were dropping stuff off at the river's edge. It was pulverizing the road, so they just kind of gave up on it. So this is what Atwater Street used to look like next slide.

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00:11:25.200 --> 00:11:30.380

Marc Pasco: This is what it looks like. Now you can see a lot of the abandoned buildings and and weighted lots

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00:11:30.420 --> 00:11:37.630

Marc Pasco: have given way to to a plaza in Greenway. This is Cullen Plaza. This is the first plaza that we

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00:11:37.920 --> 00:11:40.760

Marc Pasco: we opened back in 2,007

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00:11:42.920 --> 00:11:44.280

Marc Pasco: next slide

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00:11:45.920 --> 00:11:58.859

Marc Pasco: column Plaza. This is general. This is General Motors. This is the Renaissance Center. This is the World headquarters of General Motors. This is what it used to look like you can see just parking and just abandoned just junk along the riverfront

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00:11:59.140 --> 00:12:01.509

Marc Pasco: post-transformation next slide.

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00:12:03.350 --> 00:12:08.620

Marc Pasco: This is what it looks like. Now, this is the first park bars that we open next slide.

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00:12:10.080 --> 00:12:36.689

Marc Pasco: Gibberishard Park is a former city, Detroit Park, that it was a well loved park, but the city of Detroit was kind of in bad shape back then, back in 2,009, they didn't really have the ability to invest in their parks. They couldn't even cut the grass as much they liked to, and a lot of their city parks. This was along the riverfront. This was part. This was within that that 5 and a half mile vision that we have from bridge to bridge. So we went to the city

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00:12:36.740 --> 00:12:50.510

Marc Pasco: and said, You know you can keep the land. But let us kind of rematch in that part and transform it into something great. Give us the the easement, and we'll manage it for you forever, and turn it into this great destination. So the next slide.

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00:12:53.000 --> 00:12:56.319

Marc Pasco: This is what it looks like. Now, this is Gibberishard Park.

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00:12:56.460 --> 00:12:57.470

Marc Pasco: next slide.

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00:12:59.790 --> 00:13:07.139

Marc Pasco: Valet Park is our newest park to open. It opened in 2019, and with the pandemic we kind of

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00:13:07.330 --> 00:13:15.499

Marc Pasco: kind of through a little bit of a curve ball. The the park really didn't get to to live up to its full glory until probably 2021, because we are

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00:13:15.870 --> 00:13:32.929

Marc Pasco: kind of slowing things down and and not able to do everything we wanted to do with it. But people used the space because people needed to get out during the pandemic. But it wasn't until 2021, when we were able to start gathering with more people and having bigger events there. So this is what it looked like before.

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00:13:34.560 --> 00:13:38.990

Marc Pasco: This is what it looks like now. It used to be a site for

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00:13:39.100 --> 00:13:49.100

Marc Pasco: industry. There is a coast guard stored buoys there, and was also a cement plant as well, so we open it up to one of our premier public spaces next slide

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00:13:51.010 --> 00:14:06.370

Marc Pasco: southwest Greenway, in addition to the river walk along the riverfront. We also have 3 Greenways and one of them is southwest Greenway. It used to be a creek back in the day, and then it was kind of railroad, and it just kind of sat abandoned and flooded. And there was a lot of homeless

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00:14:07.220 --> 00:14:15.860

Marc Pasco: people living down there, and and crime going on down there. So just recently. just this year, actually, we opened it up

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00:14:16.020 --> 00:14:20.389

Marc Pasco: and celebrated the transformation into the next slide

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00:14:21.540 --> 00:14:35.540

Marc Pasco: into this. So at one end is the Iconic Michigan Central Train Station, which people are which Ford Motor Company is working on transforming. And right outside their back door is this green way which will take people

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00:14:35.600 --> 00:14:41.360

Marc Pasco: to the riverfront in a new park that we're working on, which Mayor is going to talk about here in a few minutes next slide.

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00:14:42.760 --> 00:15:08.199

Marc Pasco: No Royal promenade. I mentioned a few minutes ago that our our bridge bridge vision, and we're this close to finishing our vision for the East River front. This is the far easternmost part of that vision. This is, you saw the Giveroshar Park in the bridge. This is the underside of that bridge to Belle Isle, and next week we're going to celebrate the opening of this half-mile stretch along the unreal promenade next slide.

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00:15:10.460 --> 00:15:12.159

Marc Pasco: and that's a look at it right there.

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00:15:12.740 --> 00:15:19.910

Marc Pasco: and I'm talking fast, cause I know Mary has some good stuff that I want her to have time to be able to get to as well. And next slide, please.

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00:15:21.320 --> 00:15:42.579

Marc Pasco: And this is a great segue into Mary. So that was a quick overview of our before and after photographs. There's quite a few other additional public spaces that I would have loved to have more time to get through and show you those incredible transformations. But we have a limited time here, so I'm going to turn it over to Mary, who is going to talk about not only programming, but talk about our vision for the future as well.

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00:15:43.890 --> 00:16:05.580

Mary Howlett: Thanks, Mark. Hi, everybody. So Mark, give a great overview of a lot of our space along a river walk in our associated parks and some of our green ways. And so, you know, we've we've in 20 years we've we've made all this progress and and a lot of transformation has taken place. And so what do we do with those places? How do we bring the people down to the riverfront? How do we bring them into our space

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00:16:05.610 --> 00:16:14.260

Mary Howlett: and have them understand that this spaces for them and have the community come down and participate in this. You know great area along the riverfront.

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00:16:14.650 --> 00:16:40.550

Mary Howlett: So we have a very dedicated programming team who's part of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. And if you ask me, they're the hardest working people in the city. They spend countless hours programming our spaces along our parks and our greenways to open them up to the community with things that are inviting to them, are interesting to them and are value to them, and are almost always free.

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00:16:40.550 --> 00:16:50.629

Mary Howlett: And so we partner with a lot of different organizations, businesses and groups in Detroit and throughout Metro Detroit to create programming.

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00:16:50.630 --> 00:17:08.569

Mary Howlett: That kind of attracts everybody. We do a lot of fitness programming. We do a lot of nature programming. A lot of things for kids and families, cultural music programming. So we're gonna go through a few of these slides just to kind of touch on a couple of our popular programs next slide.

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00:17:09.700 --> 00:17:20.029

Mary Howlett: So this is our riverfront run. This is one of our bigger events that kind of brings a lot of people in from not just the city, but from all around the Metro Detroit area, and they run up and down the riverfront next slide.

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00:17:22.050 --> 00:17:35.209

Mary Howlett: Kids. Fishing fest is another very popular event. This is 100% free. And kids can come down and learn how to fish in Millican, State Park, and Harbor, which is along the riverfront, but also run by the Michigan, Dnr. One of our

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00:17:35.290 --> 00:17:38.290

Mary Howlett: best partners next slide

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00:17:40.070 --> 00:18:00.030

Mary Howlett: globa, which is kind of difficult to say, is one of our most popular fitness programs. As you can see we do nighttime. Yoga out on the riverfront. There's a beautiful shot with the Ambassador Bridge. So that's the western end of our 5 miles of of riverfront next slide.

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00:18:01.600 --> 00:18:04.079

and reading and rhythm on the river front.

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00:18:04.300 --> 00:18:15.380

Mary Howlett: Well, my lights just went out in here. That was really strange. My lights just went out in the room. I'm in reading about the mountain riverfront is one of our most popular

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00:18:15.580 --> 00:18:36.769

Mary Howlett: family and kids activities that runs all summer long, and we partner with General Motors and the Detroit Public Library. And thank you. I don't know how that happened. That was just kind of some comic relief the Detroit Public Library. And every kid who comes to reading and rhythm on the riverfront, and there are thousands every summer goes home with a free book.

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00:18:36.770 --> 00:18:48.070

Mary Howlett: From the Detroit Public Library, and that right? There is GM, CEO, Mary Barra. So we get some local celebrities to come and partner with us. To read books to the kids.

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00:18:48.070 --> 00:19:12.369

Mary Howlett: so like, I said, almost a hundred percent of our programs are free. We have a few fundraisers every year, and there's a couple of programs that cost maybe \$5. But I would say about 99.5% of our programming is completely free. We want the community fee to feel that the riverfront is theirs. It's for them. And our programming is one of the one of a lot of for a lot of people. It's their entry into the riverfront.

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00:19:12.370 --> 00:19:19.219

Mary Howlett: They come to one of our programs. They see some of our spaces, and they discover the riverfront for themselves.

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00:19:19.220 --> 00:19:24.010

and then they would come back down, maybe not just for a program, but just to take a walk or a bike ride

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00:19:24.450 --> 00:19:26.020

Mary Howlett: next slide.

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00:19:26.750 --> 00:19:45.240

Mary Howlett: So this is kind of a visitor snapshot of who comes to our riverfront. And we're really proud of this, because, as you can see, it's it's a really great mix. You know, 40% of the people who visit our Detroiters from right within the city limits, and almost the same amount, or from, you know, southeast Michigan, in the tri-county area, right around where we live.

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00:19:45.240 --> 00:20:07.120

Mary Howlett: We also attract, you know, people who are visiting from out of town and internationally, detroit in recent years has gotten a little more popular with visitors, and and it's kind of a little bit of a Renaissance that we've had. And the riverfront really does attract everyone. But we're very proud of the fact that specifically, a lot of Detroiters come and and spend time on their riverfront

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00:20:07.510 --> 00:20:08.440

Mary Howlett: next slide.

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00:20:09.460 --> 00:20:14.659

Mary Howlett: Here's just a quick snapshot of some of the impact and and benefits.

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00:20:15.320 --> 00:20:23.920

Mary Howlett: of the Detroit riverfront and sort of the money that's been invested. We have 3 million annual visitors and

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00:20:24.400 --> 00:20:31.849

Mary Howlett: it brings in a lot of economic development to 82.3 million dollars in annual spending by visitors. Next slide, please.

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00:20:32.540 --> 00:20:43.609

Mary Howlett: So I've got just a couple of minutes. I want to talk about the future. So we are, as Mark stated, in the middle of completing a vision for 5.5 miles of revitalized riverfront

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00:20:43.850 --> 00:20:44.830

Mary Howlett: next slide.

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00:20:48.150 --> 00:21:13.759

Mary Howlett: So anything in light blue. Here are things that are not quite complete but are well underway. And, as Mark mentioned, the Unile promenade is going to open next week. We're just over a week away from that, and that will complete our vision for the East River front. On the west. We are under construction and well underway on Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. This is our biggest project to date. We're very excited about it next slide.

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00:21:16.080 --> 00:21:40.689

Mary Howlett: So we're gonna just show you a few renderings of that space that is set to open in May of 2025. It's a 22 acre park that has various elements from a sport house to a water garden it has an outdoor classroom we're going to have there going lights again. I didn't touch a thing. I think this room is haunted. What's

going on in here?

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00:21:40.720 --> 00:22:01.460

Mary Howlett: there is going to be an outdoor classroom, and we have recently hired an education programmer to specifically program that space for educational purposes. So this park is really a game changer for us, and we really believe it will be a game changer for the city of Detroit. Did you even touch it? That was just crazy. We like to have a lot of fun here.

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00:22:03.160 --> 00:22:05.000

Mary Howlett: so if you could just go back just

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00:22:05.010 --> 00:22:11.799

Mary Howlett: I wouldn't mind going through these slides just really quickly. Individual. There you go. So that's this. Okay, that's fine. That's fine.

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00:22:12.790 --> 00:22:27.810

Mary Howlett: This. This is gonna be the kids play area. This slide and placecape was specially designed. It's a 2 story tall. A 2 story. Tall bear, as you can see. With with the slide that comes down next slide.

119

00:22:29.950 --> 00:22:36.089

Mary Howlett: This is the sport house that has 2 competition size basketball courts. That'll be open to the public next slide.

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00:22:37.770 --> 00:22:47.180

Mary Howlett: This is the hill where we're going to be able to have things like outdoor movies and concerts. So there'll be a big green space, and that's right along the river walk there you can see next slide.

121

00:22:49.490 --> 00:22:56.190

Mary Howlett: This is the Water garden that will have a dock, and you can. You'll be able to kayak and paddle boat in there next slide.

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00:22:58.240 --> 00:23:20.270

Mary Howlett: And as many people know. I hope we've been named America's best river walk 3 years in a row by the U.S.A. Today, readers choice awards. And we're very proud of that, because this is something that is voted on by by by the readers, by the people. So we know that Detroiters are very proud of their riverfront, and they're very proud of the work that's been done, and they

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00:23:20.320 --> 00:23:30.370

Mary Howlett: you know, they really do believe that that we deserve that to to win this award 3 years in a row. So we've been really proud of that. I think I'm right on time. 3, 55

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00:23:31.540 --> 00:23:35.120

Mary Howlett: minus summer technical difficulties.

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00:23:36.080 --> 00:24:03.599

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Yes, right on time, Mary Mark. Thank you so much for providing that that quick overview of the work that you've undertaken in Detroit. We will have time to revisit. You know these themes. Thank you, Mark, for answering questions that have already come up, and there will be more so. Everyone. If you have any other questions that come up as the next presentation is going on, please feel free to add them to our QA.

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00:24:03.910 --> 00:24:11.760

Erika Pinto / SPUR: So with that I will turn it over to you, George, to share more on on Memphis. Thank you.

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00:24:15.070 --> 00:24:28.180

George Abbott: Yes, thank you very much. And I bring apologies from Carol, who I know, is stuck in another meeting. She should be joining us at some point. But I'm gonna go ahead and get started, and hopefully, Carol will be here.

128

00:24:28.200 --> 00:24:32.260

George Abbott: Before we before I get to the end of this presentation.

129

00:24:32.370 --> 00:24:39.349

George Abbott: So really glad to be here. Obviously a lot of you know where Memphis is?

130

00:24:39.810 --> 00:24:50.900

George Abbott: we but Carol and I are from Memphis River Park partnership. We're a nonprofit very similar to the Detroit riverfront Conservancy that manages

131

00:24:51.230 --> 00:25:09.219

George Abbott: the room front on behalf of the city of Memphis. And I wanna take a moment and just give great props to the Conservancy and the work that's been done in Detroit. It's an example that we looked at as we got started on this work, and

132

00:25:09.250 --> 00:25:16.920

George Abbott: Mark Wallace and his team at the Conservancy have been very generous with us in sharing what they have learned.

133

00:25:17.000 --> 00:25:27.670

George Abbott: They may have won the best river walk award 3 times. But there's a new kid on the block, you know. Maybe maybe that award is coming to Memphis at some point.

134

00:25:27.720 --> 00:25:35.370

George Abbott: But we're we're very similar organization. And and we manage 5 miles of the riverfront adjacent to the city of Memphis.

135

00:25:35.670 --> 00:26:01.650

George Abbott: We're about 5 years old. The organization was established in 2,018, and this is a picture from 2,018. This is the type of landscape that we would dealing with on the riverfront, so spaces that were kind of blank, devoid of activity. Division between downtown and the riverfront, you know. Barriers obstacles to getting there.

136

00:26:01.970 --> 00:26:10.990

George Abbott: The riverfront was disconnected. I kinda sleepy. You know we were really reliant on big events to to bring people in.

137

00:26:11.000 --> 00:26:23.390

George Abbott: We the this picture that you're looking at. Here was a formally Confederate park, so we had parks that were unwelcoming. You know whether that statues have gone. But the legacy remained.

138

00:26:23.400 --> 00:26:28.380

George Abbott: And there really wasn't a whole lot of energy around the river from

139

00:26:28.600 --> 00:26:48.439

George Abbott: you would see, this is really our showpiece Riverfront Park. This is Tommy Park. You'll see what it looks like now. But it was always just depressing to go down and see families huddling together in the little shade they could find, and you'd only make it really an hour, cause there was nothing to do down there.

140

00:26:48.870 --> 00:26:59.359

George Abbott: And this is what the riverfront looks like today. This is Tommy Park. This is 61 million dollar project that just reopened on September second

141

00:26:59.430 --> 00:27:05.359

George Abbott: Tom Lee is at the center of a 5 miles

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00:27:05.400 --> 00:27:17.990

George Abbott: trail. We've remade 3 parks essentially, in the last 5 years we've remade the entire western edge of downtown. So how did this happen? How do we do so quickly?

143

00:27:18.530 --> 00:27:22.599

George Abbott: Well, it's it's helpful to look back a little

144

00:27:22.790 --> 00:27:51.860

George Abbott: further into history. This map that we're looking at here is from 1870, and, as you can see from the looks of the riverfront, really really was not a space for recreation at all. Really in indust an industrial space. And most of the city turned away from the riverfront. This is the type of activity that was going on down there not not really the place where you would come with your family to? To hang out and recreate? But we knew even in this photo. You can see

145

00:27:51.860 --> 00:28:08.210

George Abbott: the majesty of the river, you know. It's a mile wide. When the river rises in the spring it can be up to 3 miles wide, and it is the most spectacular spot. I'm definitely not biased, but I would say it's the most spectacular spot on the Mississippi River.

146

00:28:08.460 --> 00:28:13.029

George Abbott: America's most storied river, and over the years there were

147

00:28:13.060 --> 00:28:31.060

George Abbott: more than 20 different plans put together for the riverfront and very few were executed, so we knew that it was going to be a challenge to, to move things and to move things quickly. So first thing we did is we put together the right team of people to kind of hold a vision.

148

00:28:31.060 --> 00:28:49.560

George Abbott: This picture you're looking at is is a trip that we that we took. We kind of organized a riverfront task force. We took members of Council, members of the Mayor's administration to see a bunch of riverfront, including Detroit. Here's a picture from Detroit to see what was possible on the riverfront.

149

00:28:50.060 --> 00:28:52.640

George Abbott: With that kind of

150

00:28:52.670 --> 00:29:04.990

George Abbott: with the possibilities clear. And you know the the agreement that we had to do something, and we had to do something quickly. This document was produced. This is the riverfront concept. It laid out a

151

00:29:05.040 --> 00:29:15.179

George Abbott: a vision for the 5 miles of riverfront that we manage and included, comes from more than 4,000 Memphians, and it kind of gave us a roadmap to move forward.

152

00:29:15.190 --> 00:29:20.870

George Abbott: Of course we needed to start executing this. We needed to show some progress in the first part

153

00:29:20.890 --> 00:29:26.799

George Abbott: that we started with is River Garden. You remember those pictures I showed you earlier of

154

00:29:26.990 --> 00:29:40.390

George Abbott: a vacant lawn. That is this same park. So we remade this park to be. It's about an acre and a half to be kind of built a jewel box, and to demonstrate the aspiration that we were striving for.

155

00:29:40.800 --> 00:29:58.420

George Abbott: On the same day we opened River Garden. We also opened river line and river line is our 5 mile walking and biking trail that connects the riverfront together. So you that is our our entry into the best river walk competition.

156

00:29:58.420 --> 00:30:19.849

George Abbott: So you can now ride the entire length of the riverfront without. We're only having to go on street once. Part of that work was to create a unified brand and a unified signage package. So I will never forget. When I arrived in Memphis in 2,018 I rode my bike the length of the river from, and I counted the number of different signs that I saw.

157

00:30:19.850 --> 00:30:40.319

George Abbott: I found 6 different brands, 6 different riverfront brands. Many signs, some that were just feet away from each other with conflicting information, old information, and nothing that really was invitational or compelling. So it was really big to create that unified

158

00:30:40.350 --> 00:30:50.039

George Abbott: identity and signage is a really big part of that helps identify where you are. In in what space you're in.

159

00:30:50.440 --> 00:31:05.989

George Abbott: The second part that we completed this was Fourth Bluff Park. This was in 2019 this is also a remake remake of a formerly Confederate park. You're looking at a picture from a concert series that we hosted in the Park

160

00:31:06.030 --> 00:31:10.379

George Abbott: and where you see all of those people sitting where you see those

161

00:31:10.550 --> 00:31:25.229

George Abbott: trees. That was where we once had a statue of Jefferson Davis. And so I think it's really amazing to look at this picture. And to see, you know, Memphians of of all colors, of all backgrounds, of all

162

00:31:25.290 --> 00:31:42.299

George Abbott: political persuasions enjoying it the space, the neutral space together. This is also the place where we host our playoff watch bodies. And this party specifically

163

00:31:42.300 --> 00:32:03.500

George Abbott: was in, if I remember this day, and it was just so amazing, you know, a part that many people for such a long time had known as a place where we go to kind of argue with one another, you know. Should the statue come down, what should we do with all the Confederate stuff, you know, is now the place where we came together to enjoy watching the grizzlies.

164

00:32:03.640 --> 00:32:14.579

George Abbott: obviously, you guys got a good basketball team out there in California, too. I think this might have even been a game against Golden State. And that brought us on to our biggest project.

165

00:32:14.990 --> 00:32:33.680

George Abbott: So this picture right here. This shows you Tom Lee Park, Tomly Park is a core of engineers Dyke Wolf created in the early nineties. So it's man made land about a mile long. And when it was created back in 1990,

166

00:32:34.410 --> 00:32:39.860

George Abbott: put a little grass on top of it and pretty much left it that way. So this is what the pug look like back in

167

00:32:40.140 --> 00:32:55.100

George Abbott: 2018. But we knew that there was a huge opportunity here. It's the biggest, the most visible park on the riverfront. It's the most accessible park on the riverfront, and it's the first thing you see when you enter Memphis when you enter Tennessee.

168

00:32:55.200 --> 00:33:03.639

George Abbott: studio, gang and scape were the design team for this park. This is one of the first

169

00:33:03.660 --> 00:33:09.799

George Abbott: renderings that they gave us about what they were planning to produce and this is what

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00:33:09.880 --> 00:33:21.070

George Abbott: ultimately ended up being built. So I think they did a pretty good job. But I'll mention a couple of things you can see from this perspective, that park is

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00:33:21.080 --> 00:33:25.820

George Abbott: long and thin. There are kind of areas of open

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00:33:25.830 --> 00:33:33.189

George Abbott: land interspersed with areas of activity in between it.

173

00:33:33.320 --> 00:33:59.600

George Abbott: It's a it's an investment both in making a place for people and in restoring the ecology of the river from. We're at a really important place on the Mississippi River flyway. Just Gonna flick through these real quick. I know we're kind of short on time. But Tom Lee, the man who this park is named after was a Black River worker from Memphis in 1925. He saved 32 people

174

00:33:59.640 --> 00:34:16.209

George Abbott: from a steamship disaster on the Mississippi River. He was identified as a hero, and it's his legacy which kind of lives on in the park is a place where we want people to be kind. It's one another just like Tom Lee was. So a couple of things we built

175

00:34:16.550 --> 00:34:46.069

George Abbott: into this park we wanted to increase access to make it easier to get up and down between downtown on the riverfront. So we created the very first, ADA accessible pathway to get to the park. You're welcomed into the park with a misting fountain which cools you down on those hot Memphis days that that we have really beautiful feature, especially at night when these lights come on. And we've seen all sorts of events and videos and things being filmed

176

00:34:46.070 --> 00:35:02.630

George Abbott: on the site in the center of the park. We have this spectacular Si sunset canopy as well as a beautiful playground. Beside it. Similar to the plans for Lc. Wilson Park. We have basketball right at the center of the park.

177

00:35:02.650 --> 00:35:25.469

George Abbott: And this playground with creatures of the river. Everything in the playground is creatures that will live in the Mississippi River, and you even do what those creatures do. So you slide down the banks just like the River Rat is. We have fitness features that a lot of kids have taken to create an extension of the playground. Places to hang out

178

00:35:25.500 --> 00:35:27.649

George Abbott: places to play sport

179

00:35:28.190 --> 00:35:41.320

George Abbott: spectacular architecture in the park. Public art. This piece right here, is inspired by Tom Lee. It's by fiesta gates. And there are 32 of these

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00:35:41.430 --> 00:35:58.890

George Abbott: stone basalt seats in the park. And it's activated with curatorial programs we have going on there. Here's another view looking towards downtown in the south end of the park there is a wild flower meadow,

181

00:35:59.400 --> 00:36:26.610

George Abbott: and an outdoor classroom, and places for field trips come down just last week we had 600 students down in the park. I mentioned we opened on September second. These are a couple of pictures. From the opening we had a big parade down bluff, a big participatory ribbon cutting a lot of people participated in a blessing. The Tennessee mass choir

182

00:36:26.880 --> 00:36:39.149

George Abbott: sung, and we had an into faith ecumenical blessing, followed by a holy water ceremony at the Tom Lee statue, this picture showing the great great niece of Tom Lee.

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00:36:39.390 --> 00:36:49.339

George Abbott: blessing the space and creating sacred space in Tomly Park. Activations at a monument to listening, and if you have

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00:36:49.660 --> 00:36:55.029

George Abbott: 3 min I recommend you go check out the video.

185

00:36:55.520 --> 00:36:58.210

George Abbott: of our day. One celebration.

186

00:36:58.730 --> 00:37:04.390

George Abbott: I rushed through a lot right there.

187

00:37:04.420 --> 00:37:29.319

George Abbott: you know I would say a couple of things. I know Carol has has joined us, but but just to kind of wrap up. How we kind of move this forward so quickly, you know. I think it was setting. The the vision, in the first place, was very important building that shared vision. That was between our organization, between the board, between the city administration and then, of course, funders was vital.

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00:37:29.530 --> 00:37:31.640

George Abbott: Oh, Carol. are you here?

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00:37:33.320 --> 00:37:34.100

Carol Coletta : Yeah.

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00:37:35.130 --> 00:37:39.450

George Abbott: Well, feel free to weigh in whenever you want

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00:37:39.630 --> 00:37:44.219

George Abbott: But setting the vision was key, we've held relentlessly high

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00:37:44.320 --> 00:37:59.309

George Abbott: standards throughout this process? Whether that be in terms of operation and maintenance in terms of design, in terms of branding in terms of management, we have committed to delivering the very best

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00:37:59.360 --> 00:38:04.850

George Abbott: for Memphis to bringing in the best team to make that happen.

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00:38:05.480 --> 00:38:16.730

George Abbott: And a big piece of that, I think, is, is the branding, and is the aspirational quality of the riverfront. So we had to work very hard to

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00:38:17.450 --> 00:38:23.500

George Abbott: really seduce people to to visiting the river. It was a place that wasn't on.

196

00:38:23.710 --> 00:38:26.640

George Abbott: You know Memphis is is a very

197

00:38:26.660 --> 00:38:29.260

George Abbott: big city with 300 square miles.

198

00:38:29.280 --> 00:38:58.390

George Abbott: Many of those with higher incomes, have kind of moved progressively further away from the riverfront, and so to to bring them back and to create really a shared space. We needed to to build that aspirational brand which you know comes from photography, comes from our branding, comes from our messing, comes from our communications and then deliver the great space. That they expected that we all expected and knew that we deserved

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00:38:58.440 --> 00:39:03.000

George Abbott: in Memphis. And finally, last thing I would say is connection.

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00:39:03.090 --> 00:39:14.829

George Abbott: We started out with a series of disconnected assets. Some of which were in better shape than others. But everything becomes more powerful when it's connected.

201

00:39:14.840 --> 00:39:29.009

George Abbott: completing that connection. North, South connection. The river line as one of our first projects unlocked a lot of transportation to the north and south, and we are always working every day to strengthen our east, west connections

202

00:39:29.020 --> 00:39:32.290

George Abbott: between the riverfront and 2 downtown.

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00:39:33.290 --> 00:39:35.570

George Abbott: I will stop there

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00:39:36.130 --> 00:39:40.720

George Abbott: and leave the final to to Carol.

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00:39:42.000 --> 00:39:51.200

Carol Coletta : Well, I'm looking at this question from Neil Harrison. Would that be helpful to answer? Or have you answered that about funding mechanisms.

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00:39:51.710 --> 00:40:00.869

George Abbott: Okay, let me. I'll give you a quick thank you. I everybody. Probably everybody on this call understands a board meeting that went

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00:40:01.120 --> 00:40:06.730

Carol Coletta : long and board follow up. So sorry. Sorry. Sorry! But

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00:40:07.190 --> 00:40:10.130

Carol Coletta : I I love the

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00:40:10.260 --> 00:40:29.509

Carol Coletta : Let me just say I love the promise of what you're trying to do in San Jose, but I know how hard it is to get there. Let me tell you our funding mechanisms. We get an annual allocation. It is not guaranteed from the city of Memphis each year for our operating expense. We essentially say, Here's what it cost to run, you know. Keep

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00:40:29.890 --> 00:40:39.579

Carol Coletta : clean and safe the riverfront, and we try to take the overhead if you will, and put that in a separate budget us, or show it separately, so that

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00:40:39.690 --> 00:40:58.230

Carol Coletta : sit the city can feel like it's paying for direct expense on the riverfront to keep it clean, safe green, and then and then the overhead we pay for with assets that over the years the city has donated to us parking garage a parking lot

212

00:40:58.230 --> 00:41:26.619

Carol Coletta : boat docs, which actually, we had something to do with building those that we get from overnight cruise ships. So and then we have special event revenue. So we have earned revenue and off of some of off of city assets, some of

which we co built with the city some of which is from again, special events. And then we have operating revenue from the city, for I'm sure George told you about capital stack for the park.

213

00:41:26.720 --> 00:41:44.739

Carol Coletta : In that case we had city County State, some federal that's hard to spend. And then we have philanthropic, and we have individuals and corporate. So that's what the capital stack looked like. The 61 million dollars for Tommy Park.

214

00:41:44.760 --> 00:41:50.189

Carol Coletta : and I'm happy to answer any other questions. that you might have.

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00:41:51.370 --> 00:42:07.319

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Thank you, Carol, and thank you, George, for providing that overview of Memphis and sharing the transformative power that has happened. In the city and along the riverfront. I think we'll take a moment to take

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00:42:07.340 --> 00:42:13.910

Erika Pinto / SPUR: one or 2 questions that we had prep to to kick off more of the the QA.

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00:42:14.240 --> 00:42:20.559

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Though that will be answered by both Memphis and Detroit. So

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00:42:21.160 --> 00:42:26.379

Erika Pinto / SPUR: And it speaks to many of the things that we've been hearing so far. So if you could share

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00:42:26.440 --> 00:42:45.160

Erika Pinto / SPUR: public space. Revitalization, including riverfront development, often involves that a complex interplay of public and private interest. So how can cities better strike a balance between economic development and community preservation. In their riverfront projects.

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00:42:45.960 --> 00:42:49.530

Erika Pinto / SPUR: And mark, Mary, would you like to take the first step at that?

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00:42:54.160 --> 00:43:00.319

Marc Pasco: Yeah, I think the bottom. I think the most important thing is communication, you know. I think when I look

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00:43:00.400 --> 00:43:10.040

Marc Pasco: at the success that we've had over the past 20 years in the revitalization of the Detroit riverfront. I think. having those public and private

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00:43:10.890 --> 00:43:18.970

Marc Pasco: partnerships at the same table, and talking to each other, and have meaningful dialogue and regular dialogue, I think.

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00:43:19.450 --> 00:43:43.660

Marc Pasco: is really important. I mean, if you look at the patchwork of the riverfront and the Greenways it's public and privately owned land, and if they were not all at the table, and we were not all talking to each other, we wouldn't have the success that we had. So so that part is important. It's just not all the public interest who can get it done by themselves. And it's not just the private privately held interest

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00:43:43.680 --> 00:43:47.680

Marc Pasco: getting it done either. There has to be that that communication together

226

00:43:48.990 --> 00:44:05.799

Carol Coletta : it feels like in implied in the question is a a sense that economic development and community development are somehow different or at odds. I don't believe that's the case. I don't. Ii think what you have to do is

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00:44:06.230 --> 00:44:16.730

Carol Coletta : craft a narrative and a and an investment that serves both simultaneously and one strengthens the other. So I don't really see them

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00:44:17.180 --> 00:44:22.340

Carol Coletta : in opposition. As the question for me implies

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00:44:25.570 --> 00:44:26.959

Erika Pinto / SPUR: great. Thank you.

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00:44:26.970 --> 00:44:37.439

Erika Pinto / SPUR: So one of the other questions that we've been seeing are about financial sort of mechanisms.

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00:44:38.100 --> 00:45:07.050

Erika Pinto / SPUR: so tied to that, you know we're from projects often require

these significant financial investments. Carol, you you just shared, you know, a little bit more about how Memphis has approached this? Can you speak? Mark, Mary, and the Memphis team about how cities can secure funding for these projects and for and what are the potential long term economic benefits of such investments. And how you present that narrative to the stakeholders, that and leadership. In your cities. Boards, etc.

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00:45:09.600 --> 00:45:11.210

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Mark, Mary.

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00:45:12.720 --> 00:45:22.299

Marc Pasco: yeah, our our funding up until just recently. The city of Detroit was not in position to be able to provide us with with any yearly funding

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00:45:22.340 --> 00:45:47.179

Marc Pasco: for the referentialization that that is all changing. Beginning next year. So our funding over the last 20 years has come from donations from individuals and and foundations. We have gotten some federal funds here and there, but it's basically been generous individuals, corporations, companies, and foundations who have supported our vision and supported our efforts. And who

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00:45:47.250 --> 00:45:51.410

Marc Pasco: you know those those that generosity has allowed us to do what we've been doing?

236

00:45:57.170 --> 00:46:01.090

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Great anything else to add to that porridge or carol.

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00:46:01.300 --> 00:46:05.449

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Now we can move on to the next set of questions from the audience

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00:46:05.670 --> 00:46:06.510

Erika Pinto / SPUR: here.

239

00:46:07.030 --> 00:46:27.239

Erika Pinto / SPUR: so from Nick Pilch we have a question about prioritizing public transit, bicycling and walking in in and around the riverfront. How do you? How do both of y'all ensure that people are getting down to the to the waterfalls themselves.

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00:46:28.970 --> 00:46:49.319

Carol Coletta : I'll just say we. We just had a big board discussion about this today. Because along one of the things that divides our city from our riverfront is a 4 to 5 Lane City Street that at either end has a has an expressway entrance and exit.

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00:46:49.350 --> 00:47:06.179

Carol Coletta : So not a good condition for a river front. That's in addition to a railroad track and a very high bluff. So there's there's a lot of physical and mental map separation between downtown and the city and the riverfront.

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00:47:06.380 --> 00:47:08.029

Carol Coletta : so

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00:47:09.380 --> 00:47:12.020

Carol Coletta : we are.

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00:47:13.080 --> 00:47:26.429

Carol Coletta : We're trying now to work with the city to repurpose the street. The streets been been closed for many, many, many months for construction, or most of the street has been closed for construction of 2 big projects, one.

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00:47:26.650 --> 00:47:35.579

Carol Coletta : the Tomly Park that George told you about, also the cobblestone landing, which is another 5 blocks and parts of the street, have been closed off there. So

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00:47:35.800 --> 00:47:58.840

Carol Coletta : we're trying to work with the city to to have a logical strategy that that's either Slim the street or closes it completely, and then repurposes the street. We're in the midst of it, and we don't know where that will land yet, but we know that returning it to its original condition is a terrible idea, and obviously alternative. Transportation.

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00:47:58.980 --> 00:48:02.770

Carol Coletta : particularly non-motorized, is

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00:48:03.150 --> 00:48:11.250

Carol Coletta : or and certainly non gas powered has to be a big part of the mix, but

249

00:48:12.960 --> 00:48:15.280
Carol Coletta : but getting people.

250
00:48:17.440 --> 00:48:19.360
Carol Coletta : But you know, to adopt

251
00:48:20.270 --> 00:48:27.430
Carol Coletta : we've got 2,000 garage spaces within 2 blocks of a park entrance

252
00:48:27.560 --> 00:48:37.529
Carol Coletta : along Timely Park. And yet you would think that 65 spaces we built alongside the park were like going to solve the problem.

253
00:48:37.580 --> 00:48:43.469
Carol Coletta : When we have 1,500 to 2,000 people in the park at any one time. So it's like.

254
00:48:43.620 --> 00:49:08.070
Carol Coletta : no, all those 65 spaces do, except kind of create the same problem that you know spaces there on the entrance at Kroger, you know, presents or Costco. So it is. It is a dilemma to get. You know, the mind shift in car-centric cities that one needs to walk to an attraction. But obviously, if you can't do that, you don't have a downtown. So

255
00:49:08.150 --> 00:49:16.760
Carol Coletta : it's something we're working on. It's very present in our lives trying to solve the the mystery that is Riverside Drive and get it repurposed

256
00:49:18.010 --> 00:49:43.529
Mary Howlett: in Detroit. We have a series of of Greenways. 3, that are, you know, managed by the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, and in the works right now the Joe Lewis Greenway, which is going to be a 27.5 mile, Greenway going all the way around the entire rim of the city, and that's a partnership that we are involved in long term project. But that is one of the things that we and the entire Detroit community have been working on how to connect

257
00:49:43.530 --> 00:50:06.039
Mary Howlett: all the different parts of the Detroit community to be able to get around the city, and all of these then connect into the riverfront. So they connect to our current Greenways which is great. The Dewitter Cut and the South West Greenway will both be part of this 27.5 mile Joe Lewis Greenway. That's gonna be you know, developing over the next few years. And and like Memphis, we have parking, you

know, near our parks.

258

00:50:06.370 --> 00:50:34.989

Mary Howlett: people can, you know, drive their car and park near the riverfront and and take a walk, or take a bike, ride but our Greenways absolutely do help with that because they do connect into the communities, and we have a main drag as well. Jefferson Avenue that runs along where the river walk is. And it's it's a big, busy street, and recently they did put in a bike lane along Jefferson. So that's another thing that's sort of, you know, helped develop that kind of non-motorized element for the people of Detroit.

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00:50:35.610 --> 00:50:48.110

Carol Coletta : Yeah. And just, I mean great applause to Detroit, because that's the scale which all cities should be thinking, you know, with your green ways and the riverfront itself. It's just it's beautifully done. And again, bravo!

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00:50:49.900 --> 00:51:09.120

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Thank you. Thank you all. So another question that we have from the audience is one from an anonymous attendee. But the revitalization efforts been led by the Ppp's or by the community itself. How has the community been involved in the revitalization of these areas?

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00:51:10.630 --> 00:51:34.039

Marc Pasco: I'll I'll start off with that one of the things we're really proud of at the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy is our legacy of community involvement. If you go back over the last 20 years, we've literally had hundreds of community meetings, and some of them have been big meetings with 300 people in the audience, and some of them have been in church basements with 7 people.

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00:51:34.260 --> 00:51:49.080

Marc Pasco: We never wanted to cram our vision down the throats of the community of what we thought the riverfront should be. We wanted to ask the community what they wanted their river front to be, and I think we've done a good job of that.

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00:51:49.090 --> 00:51:59.120

Marc Pasco: And if you visit any of our our parks and some of our most popular amenities that we have, like the carousel and the Splash pad and

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00:51:59.310 --> 00:52:15.929

Marc Pasco: and and the butterfly garden, and things like that. Those came from those meetings and church basements and town halls and things like that during the early days. And that's the early days asking people what they wanted to see in the riverfront, and how they wanted to use it.

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00:52:19.080 --> 00:52:32.869

George Abbott: Here in Memphis. We've community engagement has really been at the core of everything that we have done starting back at the

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00:52:32.890 --> 00:52:39.500

George Abbott: the riverfront concept was put together with, input from more than 4,000 people.

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00:52:40.130 --> 00:52:44.229

George Abbott: the 2 parks that I mentioned River garden and Fourth Bluff Park

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00:52:44.370 --> 00:52:49.739

George Abbott: particularly river Garden. We actually invited.

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00:52:50.340 --> 00:53:00.230

George Abbott: you know the the the design for the buck was created after a a 6 month long pop up on the street

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00:53:00.350 --> 00:53:04.820

George Abbott: which was designed for people to come and

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00:53:05.090 --> 00:53:13.749

George Abbott: tell us what they wanted to see as as permanent changes. And then, during construction we worked with

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00:53:14.260 --> 00:53:20.820

George Abbott: 3 different schools in Memphis, and elementary and middle and high school. To actually have them

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00:53:20.830 --> 00:53:34.029

George Abbott: design and build a part of that park. And so it's really fun to see those kids come back now 4 or 5 years later and see what they built and then for Tom Lee, which was the

274

00:53:34.080 --> 00:53:47.659

George Abbott: obviously the biggest project of all. You know, we had a very open design process. So the very first concept design. We opened an engagement center, you know. Put the model in there.

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00:53:47.690 --> 00:53:57.189

George Abbott: put up some of the renderings and ask people to come in and tell us what they thought. Give us a whole lot of feedback. We we had staff in the engagement center 2 days a week.

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00:53:57.570 --> 00:53:59.939

George Abbott: we did

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00:54:00.050 --> 00:54:12.229

George Abbott: with the design process covered through Covid era. So we moved to an online model. We ran a series of of Zoom calls and we did some outdoor pop up engagement sessions.

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00:54:12.300 --> 00:54:19.620

George Abbott: But one of the most robust things that we did is was called the Youth Design Leadership program.

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00:54:19.720 --> 00:54:34.779

George Abbott: We identified students from North and South Memphis. In like 15 to 18 they

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00:54:35.070 --> 00:54:38.839

George Abbott: formed a cohort that we called the youth Design leadership cohort.

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00:54:39.030 --> 00:54:46.630

George Abbott: They actually were an integrated part of the design team. so they would meet with the with the architects once a month.

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00:54:46.660 --> 00:54:56.820

George Abbott: They will pay to stipend for that time and give the architects feedback as the design moves through the process. And

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00:54:56.950 --> 00:55:21.409

George Abbott: then they would go back to their families, neighborhoods, communities, and then bring that feedback back to the architects the next month. And not only did that deliver some really meaningful design changes to the park, it was also meaningful for the participants. You know, there was at least one of the students who was making decisions about college and decided to

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00:55:21.550 --> 00:55:27.720

George Abbott: change her major. She was gonna go into healthcare, and she decided, she said, I learned so much about

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00:55:27.730 --> 00:55:33.900

George Abbott: urban studies, the way that cities and towns work. And this is what I really want to do, which he changed to a

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00:55:33.930 --> 00:55:37.069

George Abbott: an architecture focus. So

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00:55:38.240 --> 00:55:43.650

George Abbott: so community engagement's been really really important for our

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00:55:44.330 --> 00:55:45.899

George Abbott: process.

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00:55:46.230 --> 00:55:50.239

Carol Coletta : Hey, George, did you mention? The poll! We did

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00:55:52.690 --> 00:55:58.060

George Abbott: no so what Carol is referring to? You know any, any.

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00:55:58.500 --> 00:56:11.800

George Abbott: any projects of this size. You've all seen it in any of communities will generate a lot of discussion. You know, and if it doesn't, doesn't generate any controversy, you're probably not being ambitious enough.

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00:56:12.060 --> 00:56:18.630

George Abbott: So at at particular point in our process, you know, there was a lot of community discussion about.

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00:56:18.770 --> 00:56:23.830

George Abbott: and the future of the river from. In particular. We had a couple of

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00:56:23.880 --> 00:56:28.100

George Abbott: very vocal detractors.

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00:56:28.610 --> 00:56:42.569

George Abbott: a app. It's a very vocal distract, as you know, the Tommy Park. The

previous version of the park is was wide open. It was used as a festival grounds, and there were folks who were

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00:56:43.060 --> 00:56:47.750

George Abbott: very supportive of the festival didn't want to see any changes to the park. And

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00:56:47.790 --> 00:56:57.000

George Abbott: we saw a lot of social media activity. And so we wanted to say, okay, well, how do? How can we cut through the noise and figure out what people are

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00:56:57.040 --> 00:57:03.049

George Abbott: are really saying, you know, is this just a couple of loud voices on Facebook. Or does this really represent?

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00:57:03.140 --> 00:57:07.860

George Abbott: What the community is thinking? So we ran a

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00:57:08.000 --> 00:57:21.740

George Abbott: a poll with a statistically valid sample size of adults in Memphis, and we found, extremely high support for the park, mostly the highest support among young people.

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00:57:21.810 --> 00:57:31.150

George Abbott: and among mothers, particularly communities. Some of the poor communities that are within walking distance of the park.

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00:57:31.210 --> 00:57:34.050

George Abbott: There was support throughout.

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00:57:34.440 --> 00:57:37.449

George Abbott: I think the lowest segment was was older

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00:57:37.590 --> 00:57:48.319

George Abbott: white men, but even there was still 75, 80% support for the project. So that was a really effective tactic.

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00:57:48.760 --> 00:57:53.869

George Abbott: you know, we all have board members. We all have politicians who are liable to

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00:57:54.200 --> 00:57:59.060

George Abbott: be influenced by what they're seeing on social media. But to be able to say.

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00:57:59.140 --> 00:58:11.179

George Abbott: Well, here are the actual numbers. You know what, what you're seeing. Those couple of people you hear from on Facebook do not represent the community, because here is what the community says was a really helpful tactic for us

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00:58:15.390 --> 00:58:23.429

George Abbott: I'll mention, I see, a a follow up on community engagement in the chat. I think it's worth

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00:58:24.060 --> 00:58:31.699

George Abbott: calling out that you know with with community engagement you cannot ask for what you don't.

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00:58:31.790 --> 00:58:34.820

George Abbott: No right. So if we had

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00:58:35.040 --> 00:58:43.120

George Abbott: So so what we what we found when we when we would do a lot of our community engagement?

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00:58:43.170 --> 00:58:49.040

George Abbott: Is that people would ask for slightly nicer versions of what we already had like.

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00:58:49.350 --> 00:58:52.610

George Abbott: Can can we have this? But maybe with some shade.

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00:58:52.680 --> 00:59:00.550

George Abbott: you know, and and for a lot of our community, who haven't seen who haven't traveled to

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00:59:00.610 --> 00:59:05.159

George Abbott: signature bugs who haven't been to places where they have

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00:59:06.310 --> 00:59:29.439

George Abbott: who haven't had the benefit of the trips that we took those Council members and and other members of the steering Committee on. You know it's difficult to envisage what could be possible. And so, without community engagement process, it was really about trying to get down to the root of the desire like, don't tell me what you want. Just tell me how you want to live your life, and then we'll put that

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00:59:29.480 --> 00:59:39.880

George Abbott: in the hands of the architects and the designers who can deliver something that you may never have thought of and so so community engagement is always a complex

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00:59:39.890 --> 00:59:42.270

George Abbott: challenge.

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00:59:42.590 --> 00:59:45.679

George Abbott: but but is key to success.

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00:59:45.910 --> 00:59:48.439

George Abbott: Sorry? Thank you. So next question.

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00:59:48.590 --> 01:00:02.100

Erika Pinto / SPUR: That was a wonderful place to leave off. Unfortunately, we've reached the end of our time today. I want to thank each one of our panelists for their incredible insight, and to all of you in the audience for joining us today.

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01:00:02.130 --> 01:00:26.000

Erika Pinto / SPUR: A big thank you to all our presenters. We will be sending out an email to all of you next week with more information about how to access today's recording and other resources that our panelists would like to share also feel free to follow. The incredible work of these 2 in organizations via their websites and social media. Thank you again, and we hope to see you at another spur program soon.

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01:00:26.210 --> 01:00:28.140

Erika Pinto / SPUR: and hope you have a great rest of your day.

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01:00:29.030 --> 01:00:30.170

Marc Pasco: Thanks, everyone.

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01:00:30.470 --> 01:00:31.520

Erika Pinto / SPUR: Thank you.

