

SEED BY SEED

Volunteers, Donors & Members Sowing Impact – Together

2025



The Girdham Road Sand Dunes at Oak Openings Preserve became the third state nature preserve within a Metropark with its dedication in 2025.

 **METROPARKS
TOLEDO**

SEED BY SEED...

Together

The seed of an idea to create natural spaces for the public to enjoy in Lucas County was not cultivated during a period of abundance. It was borne during a drought, the Great Depression, a time of scarcity where Toledo saw an unemployment rate of almost 80%. Yet, out of an audacious idea sprung great fruit – thousands of jobs with the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps to build Metroparks – revitalizing the city and contributing to the health and prosperity of Lucas County for generations to come.

Almost a century later, Metroparks Toledo is experiencing yet another period of growth that has altered the landscape of Lucas County and contributed to its current and future wellbeing. Ten new parks in 10 years. Almost 13,000 acres of park space and 215 miles of trails. A park within five miles of every Lucas County resident's front door. The construction of Glass City Metropark and Riverwalk on both sides of the Maumee River, "bridge to bridge." The addition of International Cove and Glass City Upriver to the Riverwalk. Testament to Metroparks' commitment to conserve the region's natural resources, the heart of our mission.

Over the last year, seed by seed, your support restored wetlands to Toledo's waterfront. It planted native species throughout the park system. It improved shelters, built new trails, and re-stocked ponds. It connected children to nature through Connections Camp and other outreach programming, helped us go Zero Waste at Glass City Metropark's Market Hall, restored turtle habitat, and so much more.

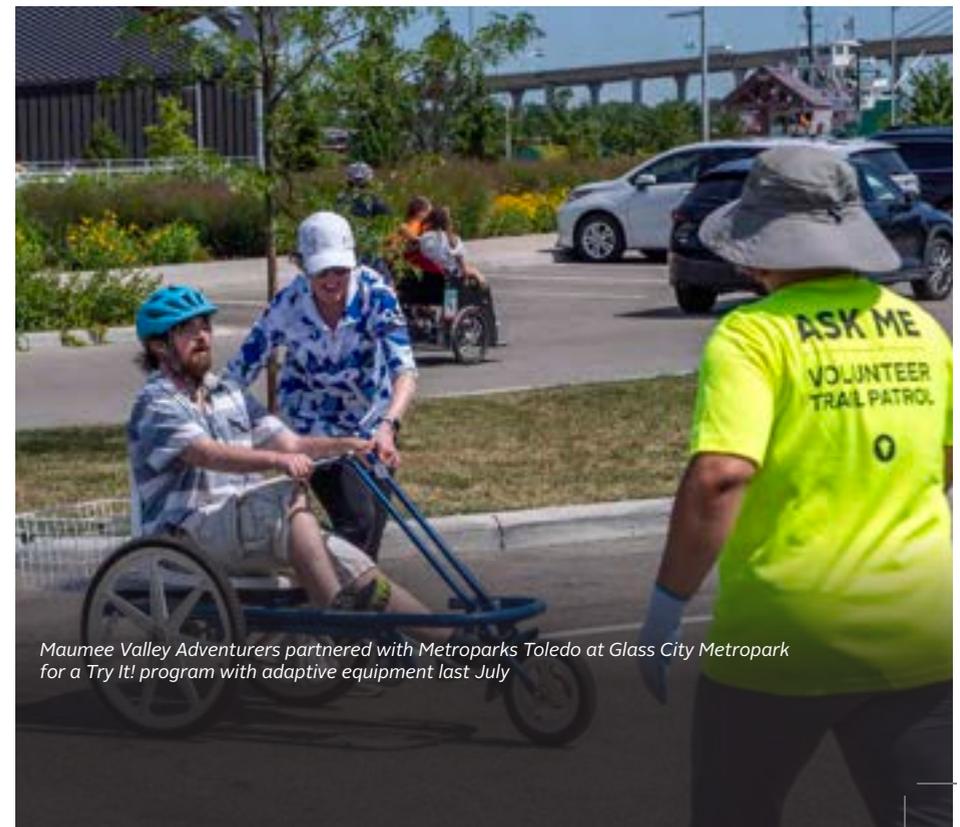
We are proud to bring home awards to our community, though that is not why we do what we do at Metroparks.

Volunteers compose even more seeds of support that help Metroparks achieve excellence. They help the park system reserve thousands of dollars a year for the park system to use toward its mission, and it could not happen without them.

Seed by seed, hand in hand with supporters, Metroparks will continue to grow and thrive as a park system dedicated to conserving the region's natural resources, determined to bring people to parks and parks to people, and committed to the idea that everyone belongs in a park.



Glass City Metropark cabanas and The Ribbon



Maumee Valley Adventurers partnered with Metroparks Toledo at Glass City Metropark for a Try It! program with adaptive equipment last July

RECOGNITION

2025

**American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)
National Chapter (Glass City Metropark)**
*Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement
(OCEA) Honor Award*

**Structural Engineers Association of Illinois
(SEAOI) (Glass City Metropark)**
Merit Award

**National Council of Structural Engineers
Association (NCSEA) (Glass City Metropark)**
Social Impact Award

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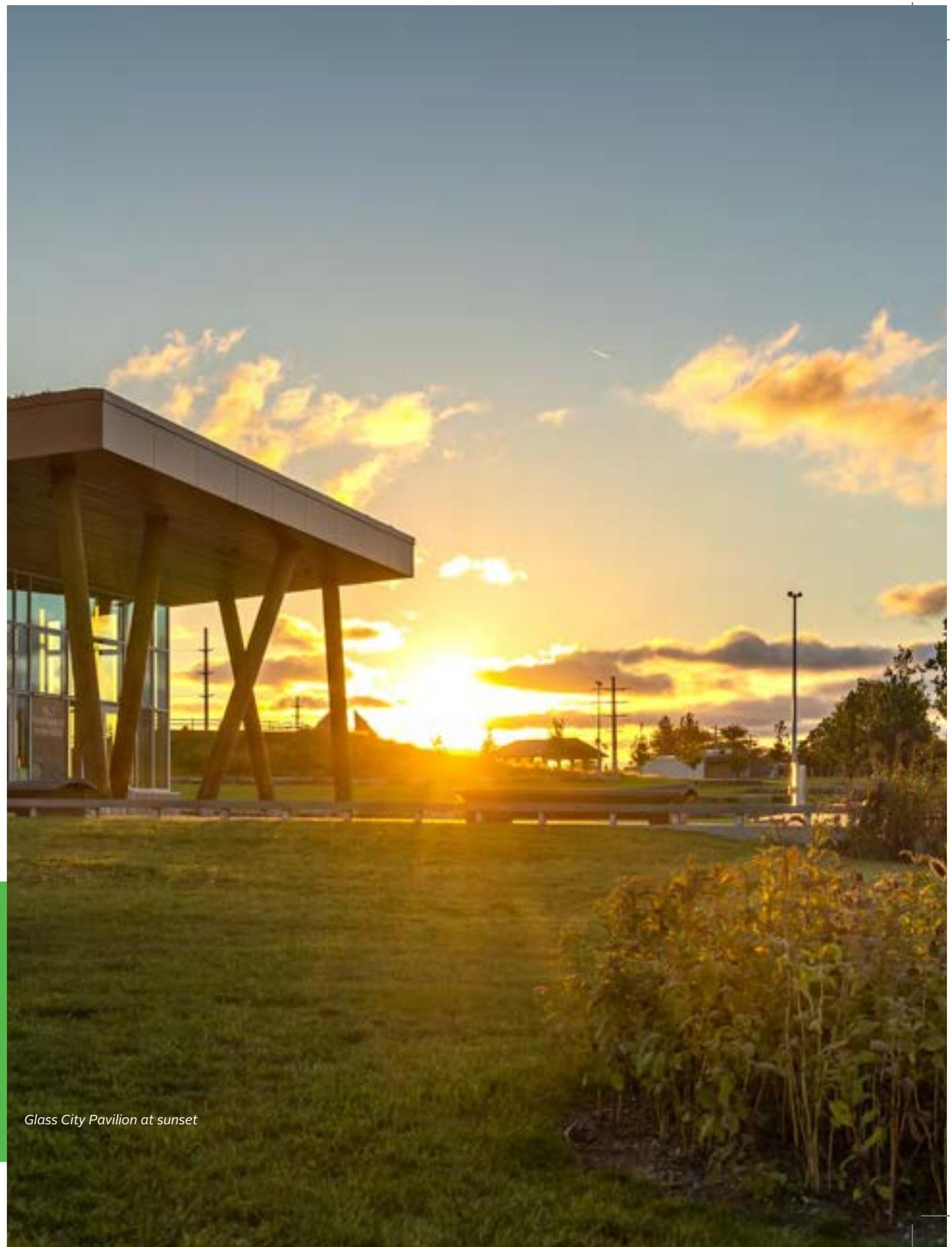
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Glass City Pavilion at sunset





50TH ANNIVERSARY WILDWOOD PRESERVE

Fifty years ago, a family estate at the crossroads of Sylvania Township, West Toledo and Ottawa Hills was destined to become a housing development, but a group of volunteers had other ideas. Against all odds during difficult economic times, they led a successful citizens' campaign to preserve the property as the ninth Metropark. Today, we could not imagine the Toledo area without Wildwood Preserve Metropark.

5TH ANNIVERSARY CANNALEY TREEHOUSE VILLAGE

One of the bright spots during a dark year – the COVID year, 2020 – was the opening of the Cannaley Treehouse Village in Oak Openings Preserve. Donated funds and in-kind contributions made the \$1.5 million project possible. The result: the first treehouse village in a public park anywhere in the USA. Designed by Nelson Treehouse and Supply, the stars of the TV series “Treehouse Masters,” the village brought a unique feature to the largest Metropark and enhanced the region’s reputation as an outdoors destination.

STATE PRESERVE DESIGNATION

The Girdham Road Sand Dunes, an iconic landscape in Oak Openings Preserve Metropark and the larger Oak Openings Region, now has the additional designation and protection of a State Nature Preserve. The dunes represent an important characteristic of the Oak Openings Region and the preserve of the same name—sand. The unique ecological region stretches across more than 1,300 square miles of land in Wayne and Monroe counties in Michigan and Lucas, Henry, Fulton and Wood counties in Ohio.



Howard Marsh at sunset

SEED BY SEED

Preservation, Conservation, Restoration

The work Metroparks Toledo does today with community, volunteer and donor support in areas of conservation, preservation and restoration will yield lasting benefits tomorrow. Our supporters are essential to the heart of the Metroparks mission – conserving the region’s natural resources.

CONSERVATION MATTERS

Since its founding in 1835, Lucas County has lost:

88%

OF ORIGINAL FORESTS/195K ACRES
an area 45 times larger than Oak Openings

89%

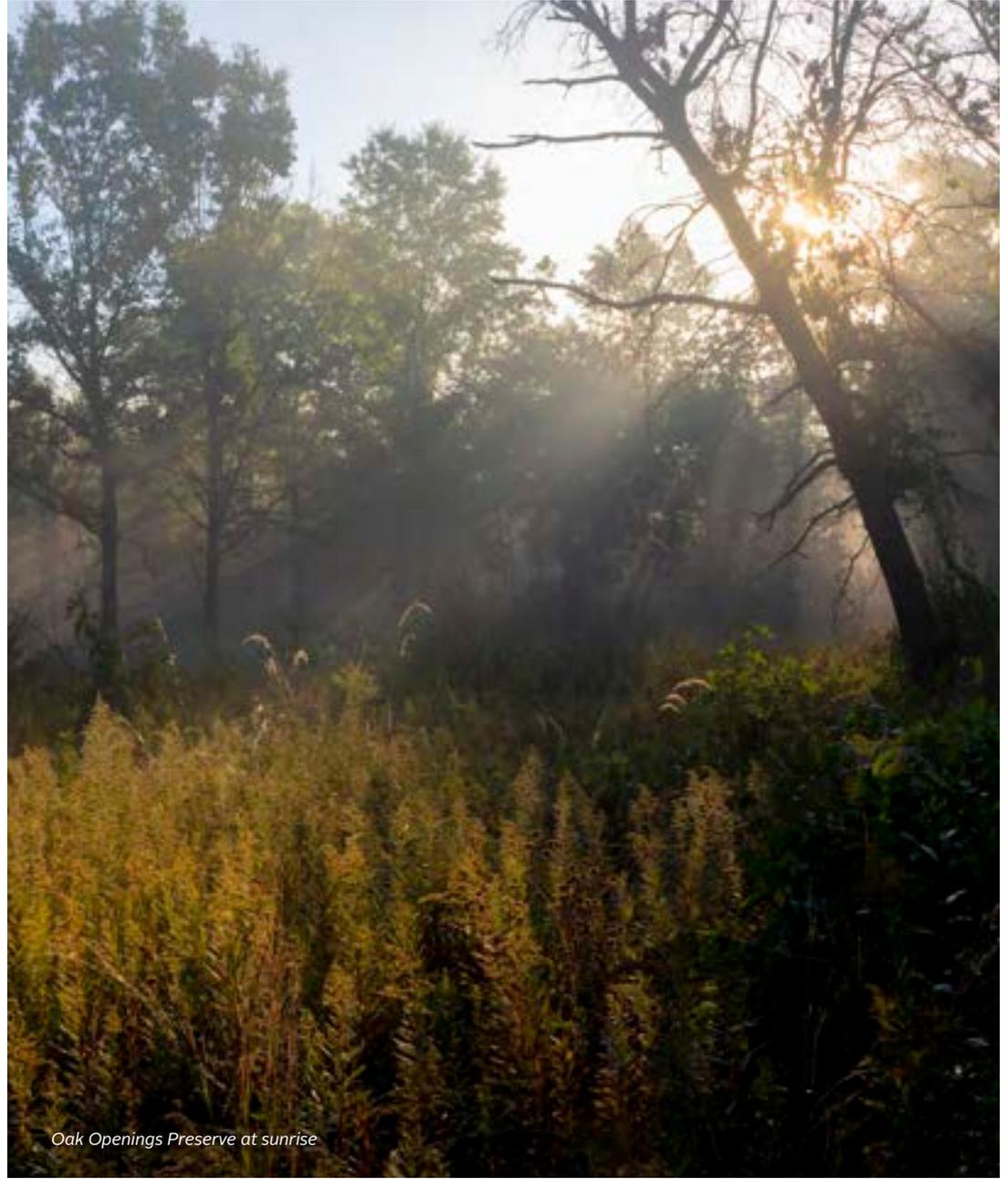
OF HISTORIC WETLANDS/87K ACRES
an area 87 times larger than Howard Marsh



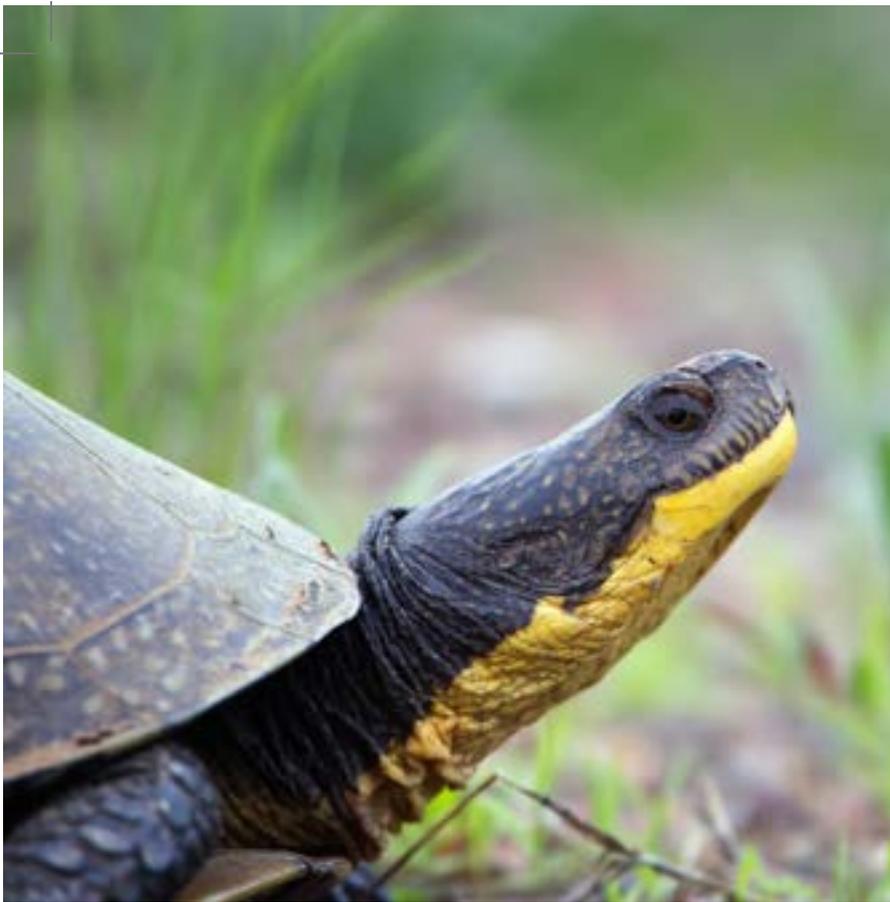
Fern forest at Oak Openings Preserve



Providence at sunset



Oak Openings Preserve at sunrise



Members and Donors Champion our Natural Resources

TURTLE HABITAT RESTORATION

Providence Metropark

Several years ago, park staff at Providence began to notice that turtles were attempting to nest along the Towpath where the canal boat runs. Since they were so close to the trail, the turtles and their nests were sometimes disturbed by the mules and people walking up and down that trail. The disturbance from the canal traffic was not good for their nest success, and after consulting on site with turtle experts at the Toledo Zoo, and with membership and donor support, Metroparks natural resources (NR) staff decided to clear invasive honeysuckle from several areas along the canal on the opposite side of the trail, to hopefully entice turtles away from the towpath to nest in these newly opened up areas that will be less prone to disturbance. Some areas are already seeing increased turtle activity in treated areas, and decreased activity along the towpath. This project will mainly benefit spiny softshell and northern map turtles, but other turtle species in the area (including state-threatened species) may also benefit from the work.



PLANT IT FOR THE PLANET GRANT

Supports Climate Resiliency

A grant received from Fifth Third Bank supported efforts to establish the Toledo region as a bird-friendly and pollinator-friendly city through reforestation and grassland restoration. Because of this support, Blue Creek Native Seed Nursery was able to grow over 50 species of herbaceous and woody plants for the Glass City Metropark and surrounding areas. Planting and maintaining over 3,000 native trees and pollinator species improved habitat and water quality, enhanced Toledo's urban tree canopy, and were used to support a native gardening workshop held at the Enrichment Center for the community and neighbors surrounding Glass City Metropark. Attendees explored interactive tables, connected with Metroparks experts, and attended engaging sessions where they learned how to create their own thriving native landscape – while having the opportunity to take some of these plants home to create their own native pollinator beds. We are grateful to Fifth Third Bank for their commitment to environmental stewardship, support for our region's climate resiliency, and for helping to beautify Glass City Metropark and the surrounding neighborhoods.



RESTORATION WORK

in the Oak Openings

A critically important natural area, Metroparks has restored hundreds of acres of prairies and savannas within Oak Openings Preserve to sustain its natural splendor and support habitat for over 100 state-listed rare plant and animal species that make this park their home. The Oak Openings Region harbors one-third of all Ohio's state-listed rare plants and animals. Since passage of a land levy in 2002, Metroparks has planted over 300 acres of new prairies and restored over 1,500 acres of degraded habitat by removing invasive plant species. This includes the restoration of over 150 acres of globally imperiled wet prairies found only in the Oak Openings and nowhere else on Earth. The work our members and donors support helps sustain the delicate ecological balance in this important, and rare, ecosystem, and we are grateful.



BLUE CREEK

Native Nursery

Thanks to generous support from our donors and members, Blue Creek Native Nursery completed several important infrastructure improvements this year that will directly benefit our area's natural space for years to come. Greenhouse upgrades help us grow stronger, healthier native plants, while improvements to our water quality system ensure the plants receive clean, consistent water. Together, these projects strengthen our ability to produce high-quality native plants for habitat restoration, supporting pollinators, and wildlife across the area.

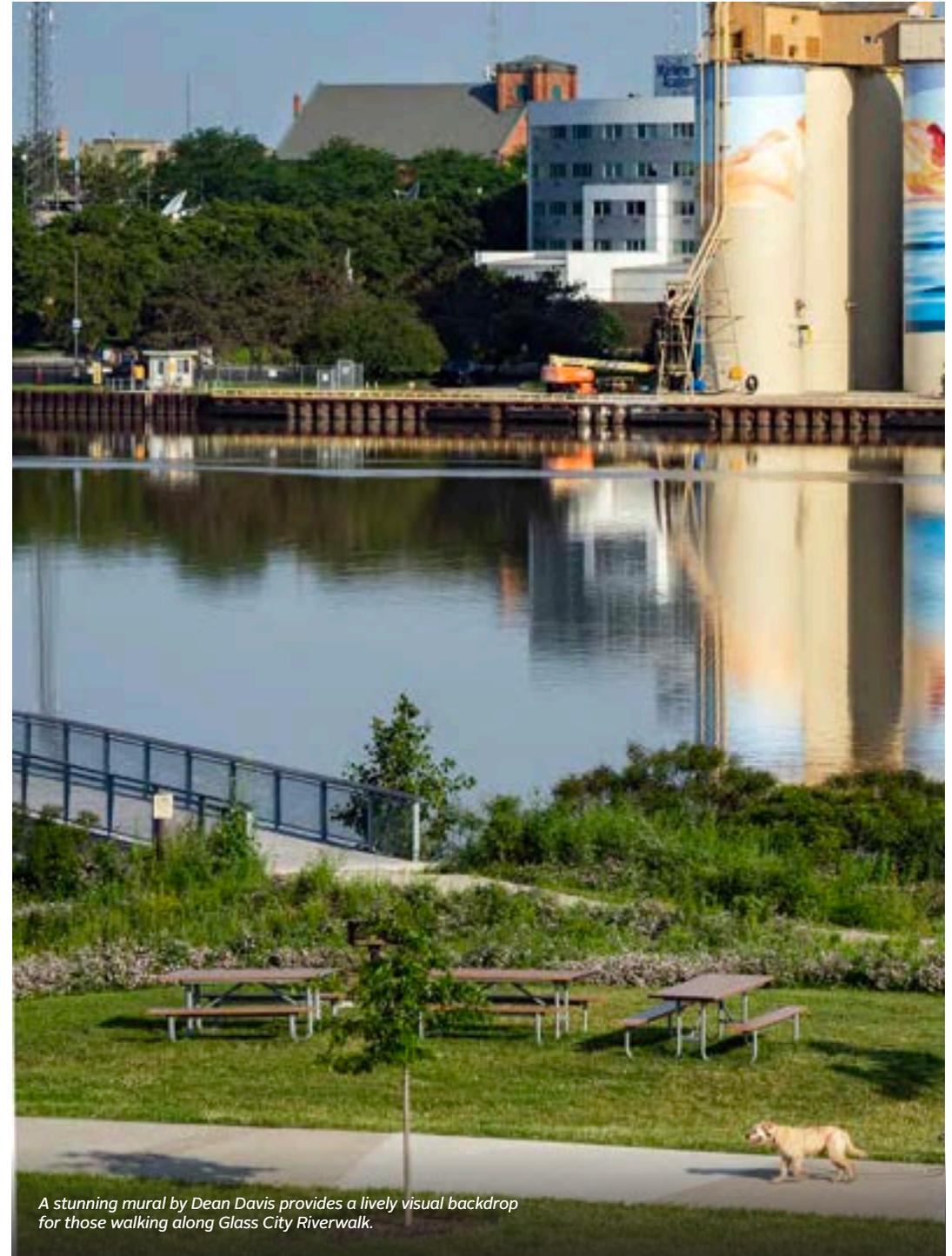
MILE BY MILE

Glass City Riverwalk

Glass City Metropark fully opened in June 2023. Since then, Glass City Riverwalk has seen nearly 2 million visits and more than 50,000 ice skaters each winter making the park one of the most popular destinations in the region. And that's only the beginning. The Metropark is just the first quarter of Glass City Riverwalk, which will stretch for 2.5 miles on each side of the Maumee River. When portions currently under construction open in summer 2026, Riverwalk will be 50 percent completed.



Aerial view of MLK Bridge and work underway Upriver at Glass City Riverwalk.



A stunning mural by Dean Davis provides a lively visual backdrop for those walking along Glass City Riverwalk.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Glass City Metropark and Riverwalk

Communities across the country are utilizing parks and public greenspace to revitalize their communities. Toledo is already seeing the benefits. Every \$1 spent on the Metroparks' initiative has resulted in \$10 in private investment.

\$400
MILLION | INVESTED
in surrounding development

\$70
MILLION | INVESTED
in private investment in east Toledo

- Apartment Development
- East Toledo's Masonic Temple
- Restaurant Improvement
- Huntington Bank Branch

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TAKING ROOT

- Newly restored wetlands
- Expanded pollinator meadows
- Young trees beginning to mature

THE RIBBON

A cherished holiday tradition

The Ribbon is now a cherished holiday tradition — a place where families gather, kids learn to skate, and the community celebrates winter in a uniquely Metroparks way.

- 2 million visits since June 2023
 - More than 130,000 ice skaters since February 2023's sneak preview
-



BRB RUNNING CLUB

Mixes Fitness with Fun

Though this is not a Metroparks-sponsored club, the BRB Running Club meets every morning at Glass City Metropark to run together at whatever pace is comfortable for those participating. In addition to building friendship and a supportive community, on August 22 the group distributed 120 backpacks filled with school supplies to area K-12 students at Glass City Metropark. Afterward, in partnership with Metroparks Toledo, those in attendance enjoyed free roller skating and climbing the rock wall. If you are interested in running alongside the group, at any pace, they meet at 5:30 p.m. every Tuesday and 9:30 a.m. every Saturday at The Docks. You can connect with the group at BRB Running! on Facebook at the BRB Running! group page.



Chanukah at The Ribbon



Visitors to The Ribbon warm up around a fire pit



National Night Out



Juneteenth Celebration



Jen Van Horn, Chief Planning and Construction Officer, gives update on progress of Riverwalk



Ice bocce at The Ribbon



Juneteenth Celebration



GLASS CITY RIVERWALK

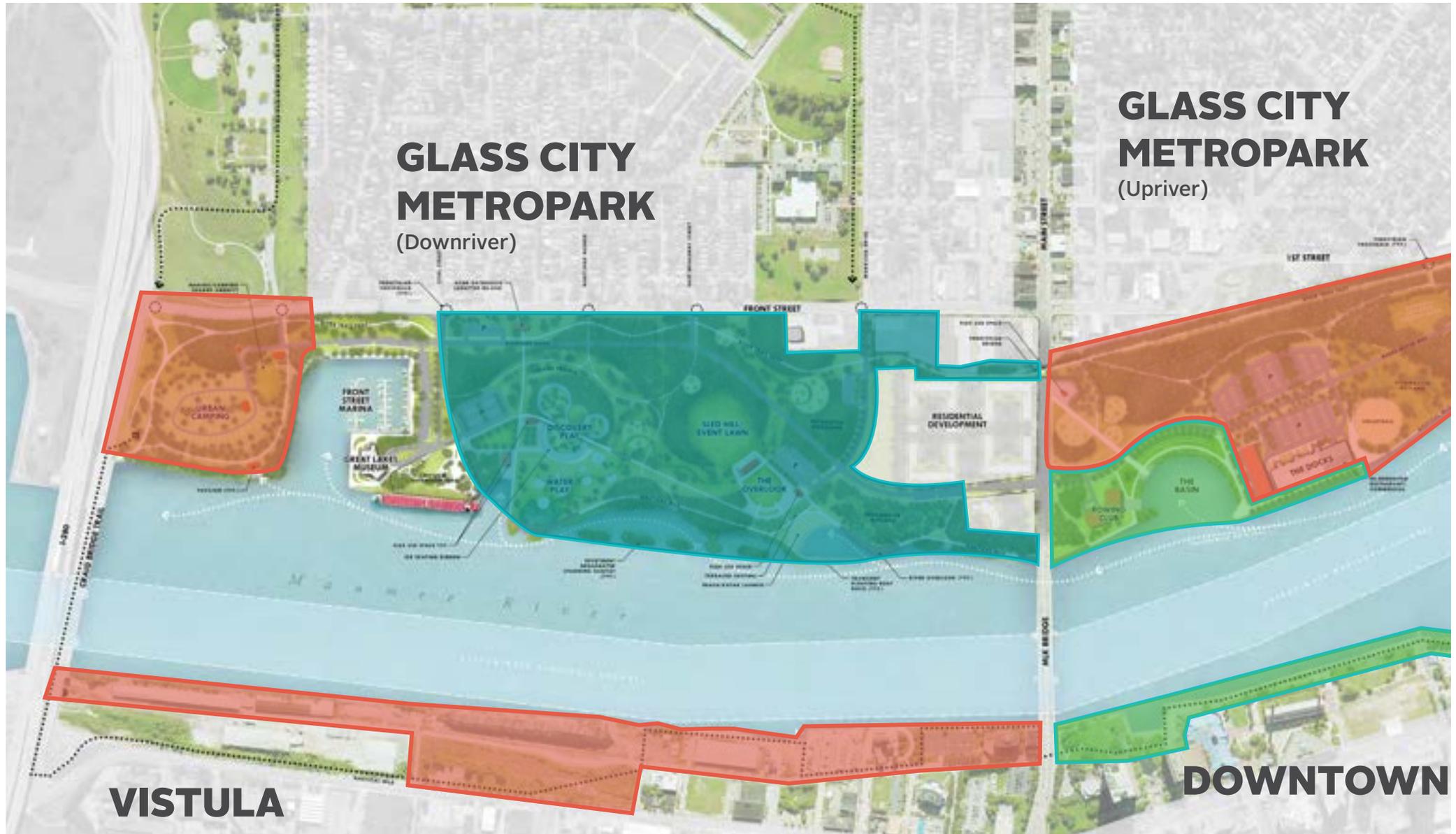


COMPLETED



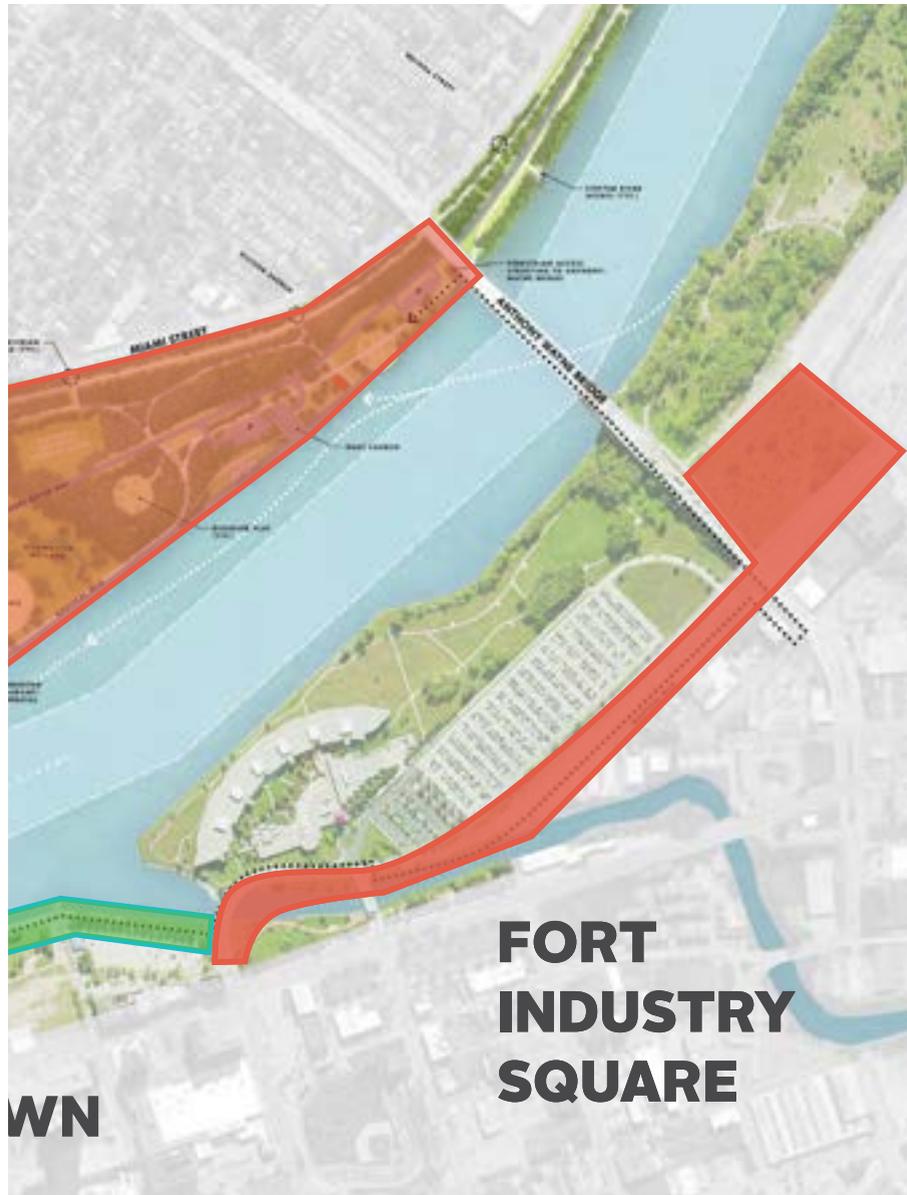
IN PROGRESS

**Scheduled to open summer 2026*





FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



Glass City Riverwalk is a unique partnership between public and private support. Thanks to that outpouring of support, the Riverwalk is almost halfway there - five miles of riverwalk - spanning both sides of the Maumee River - "from bridge to bridge to bridge."



Cabana Village at Glass City



Pavilion at Glass City



Toledo Pickle Co. on Riverwalk in the Vistula neighborhood



International Cove Area



Lighthouse on the Riverwalk, downtown area



Riverwalk and boat docks, downtown area

PERSON BY PERSON

Community & Connections



This is often a profound and proud experience for the camper that most of us take for granted as an essential building block for self-esteem.

- Morgan Sopko

Camps and Enrichment Center Coordinator, Programming

CONNECTIONS CAMP

At last year's State of the Parks, Morgan Sopko, Camps and Enrichment Coordinator, shared that her personal goal at Connections Camp—a free week of nature day camp offered in partnership with local agencies—was for every camper to hold an earthworm. To get there, staff guide campers through a thoughtful process.

Thanks to donor support, Connections Camp builds skills, confidence, and a lifelong affinity for nature.



- 1** Imagine an earthworm
- 2** Create an earthworm using clay
- 3** Hold a gummy worm
- 4** Hold a REAL earthworm



CONNECTIONS CAMP

Because of donor support...

100%

of transportation, materials and supplies are funded with donor support.

1,500

Connections Camp provided approximately 1,500 kids with a summer camp experience at no cost to them last summer.

YOUTH CONSERVATION AIDE

Over the last four years, high school students serving as Youth Conservation Aides, a paid internship program with Metroparks Toledo, have worked with Park Operations at Glass City Metropark where they are introduced to career opportunities at Metroparks, as well as gain valuable skills for future jobs. A unique aspect of the program is that transportation, often a barrier for teens to get back and forth to a job, is included as part of the program. Black and White Transportation picks the students up at the beginning of their shift and drops them off at the end of their shift. Sometimes, that pickup time is at 5:30 a.m. Students also receive boots, uniforms and meals.

THE WHEELHOUSE

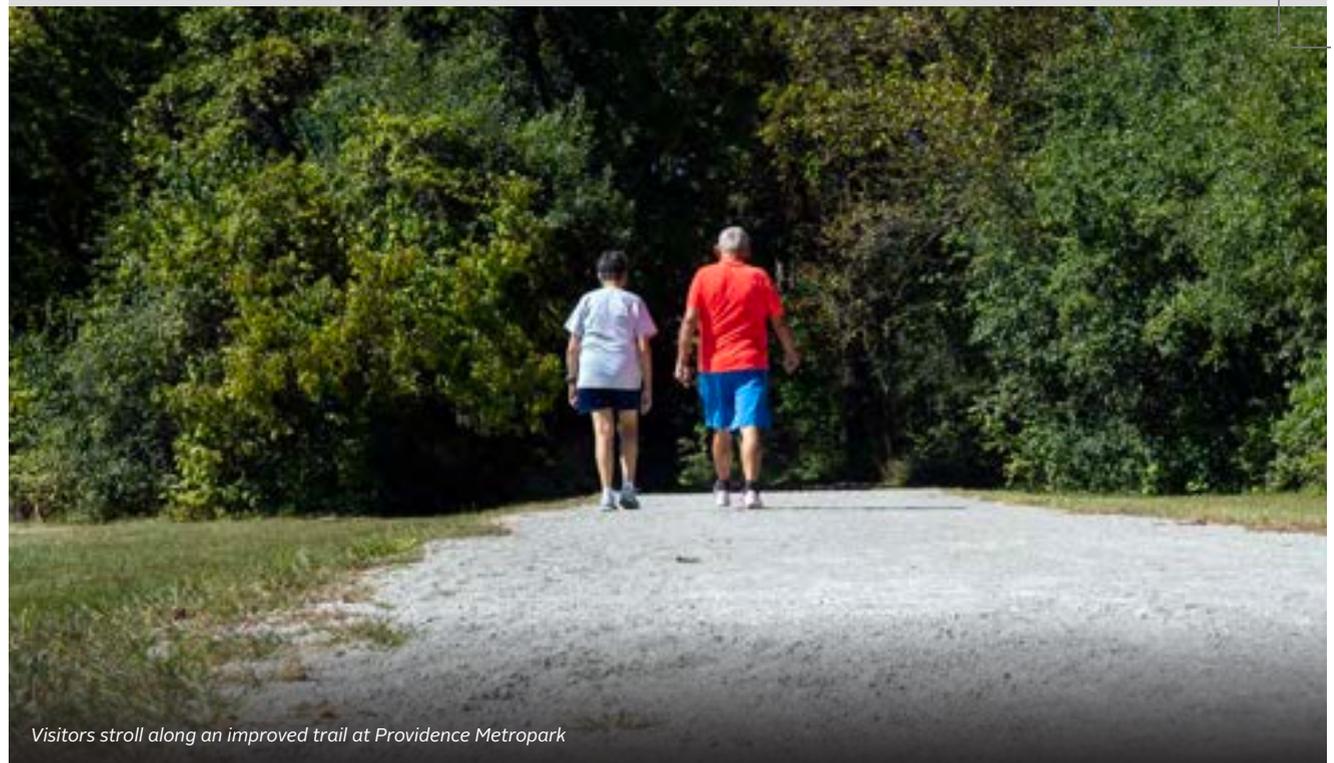
The Wheelhouse, a micro-brewery and coffeehouse at the Oak Openings Beach Ridge Area, reopened this past summer with a new partner, earnest brew works. The local small business has connected with cyclists using the Beach Ridge mountain bike trail, guests at the Cannaley Treehouse Village and other park visitors, providing them with food, beverages and a cozy place to gather.

PARK BY PARK

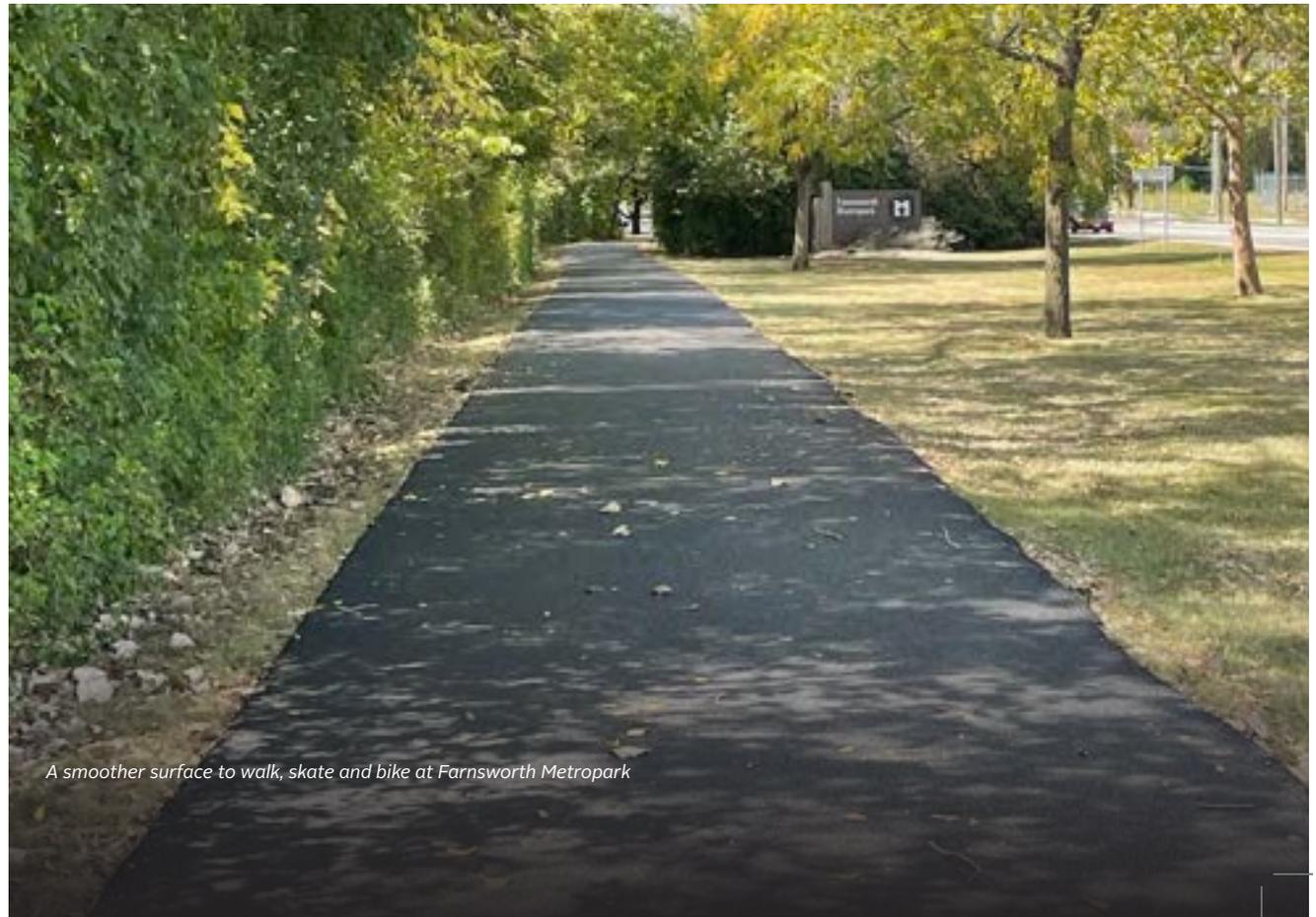
Clean, Safe & Natural

Metroparks supporters help the park system deliver excellence, park by park, year after year.

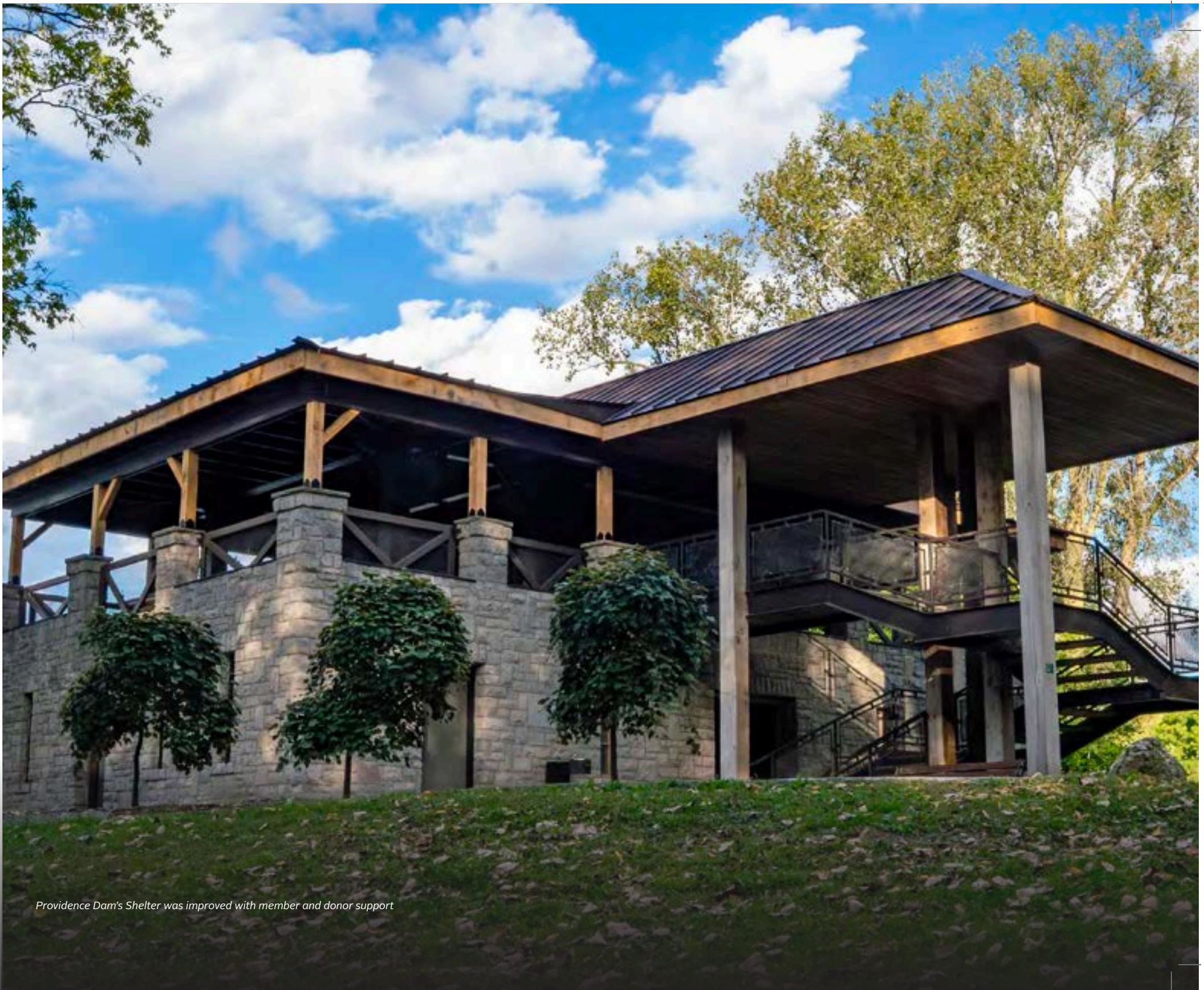
Members and donors played a key role in updating historical structures at Providence Metropark and improving trails at Farnsworth and Pearson Metroparks, keeping these facilities in top shape for everyone to enjoy long into the future.



Visitors stroll along an improved trail at Providence Metropark



A smoother surface to walk, skate and bike at Farnsworth Metropark



Providence Dam's Shelter was improved with member and donor support

GIFT BY GIFT

Year by Year

Annual giving supports initiatives throughout the park system gift by gift, year by year. There are numerous ways to give to Metroparks, from becoming a Metroparks Member and adding on your pup as a MetroBarks member, to joining the Good Natured affinity group, to making an unrestricted gift which allows the Foundation to distribute your investment amongst several key areas:

- Education, Outreach & Access
- Natural Resources Initiatives
- Trails & Connectivity
- Glass City Riverwalk



GOOD NATURED

Three years ago, a group of Metroparks supporters came together as Good Natured, an affinity group where members pool their resources and break down barriers that have kept some in our community from accessing and engaging with their parks. Throughout the year, Good Natured participants gather to Engage, Learn and Give together, voting on an initiative early in the year to receive funding from the group, and meeting for special programs and anchor events throughout the year that help them break down barriers for themselves. Programs that have benefited from Good Natured support include Connections Camp, the Ravine Area of Glass City Metropark playground, and Nature Express.



METROBARKS

MetroBarks members love Metroparks, but they really love their dogs. So much so, they celebrate their pups with a membership especially for them. MetroBarks supports the park system – from caring for Timber, Metroparks' canine ambassador and most adorable ranger, to other meaningful initiatives.



MEMORIALS

Memorial gifts to Metroparks Toledo are a meaningful way to remember a loved one. Especially if that loved one was passionate about their parks and the natural world. Lynn Ackerson was just that sort of person.

A former staff member with the Northwest Ohio District Office (NWDO) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Lynn was an avid kayaker who was passionate about her local community and life pursuits. Friends and coworkers came together in the hope of making a gift of at least one kayak in her honor for use at Glass City Metropark. With overwhelming support, the group made a gift to Metroparks of three kayaks, paddles and life vests.



METROPARKS MEMBERSHIP

Metroparks Members champion the sustainability of Metroparks for current and future generations. Each membership supports important Metroparks conservation, education, and access initiatives that might not otherwise be possible, above what taxpayer support generously provides. There are a variety of levels and associated benefits to membership including discounts on facility rentals and programs, and special, members-only events.



VOLUNTEER BY VOLUNTEER

The Gift of Time

In the past year, 841 individuals and 113 groups have volunteered a staggering 43,375 hours to Metroparks. These community members have assisted with monitoring native species, leading nature walks, assisting with special events and programs, patrolling trails, planting, weeding, trash pickup, promoting the parks, educating visitors, restoring wild spaces and so much more. Metroparks' excellence is reliant on their support and the gift of time translates into tens of thousands of dollars saved every year.





BLUE CREEK NATIVE NURSERY

The Blue Creek Native Nursery saw 132 volunteers contribute just under 1,300 hours this year, including youth volunteers from Maumee Valley Country Day School, the Wildwood Environmental Academy, Zooteens, and the Metroparks Conservation Club. A special shout out to the volunteers that came out on the weekends to help water, as well as the volunteers who came out to help maintain propagation fieldwork during the hot and dry summer months. Metroparks volunteers help the parks grow, and in the case of the Native Nursery, that is literal growth. We could not do it without them.



VOLUNTEER TRAIL PATROL

The Volunteer Trail Patrol knocked it out of the park with 12,400 hours of walking Metroparks trails, serving as community liaisons, assisting with special events, and keeping the parks safe and clean. With 261 active individual participants averaging 50 hours a year, Volunteer Trail Patrol volunteers represent a little over a quarter of the total volunteer service for the year. They are incredibly dedicated volunteers who are always looking for new opportunities to make Metroparks shine.



MANOR HOUSE

It was a busy year for Manor House Volunteers. This year marked the Manor House's 50th anniversary with a wide range of volunteer-supported events including a Jubilee, house and grounds tours, and talks. Volunteers -- 419 total -- contributed just under 5,000 hours to these special celebratory events along with Eerie Manor, Holidays at the Manor House, tours, and house upkeep. The Manor House remains one of the most iconic pieces of Metroparks Toledo, and we are proud of and grateful for our volunteers' hard work to make it that much more special for park visitors.

Thank You

for Championing Your Metroparks



Become a Member



Become a Volunteer



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