

**Belle Isle
Strategy Memo
January 7, 2004**

Belle Isle

Strengths

- *Will enhance economic development of area.*
Belle Isle enhances the value of the expanding Rivertown development by providing a large outdoor area near commercial and residential units. It will be connected to Rivertown via the East River Park.
- *Detroiters love Belle Isle.*
They do not want to see the park fall into disrepair and eventually disuse. The HCMA will ensure that the park remains beautiful and pristine.
- *Belle Isle is a beautiful park.*
A large wooded area, great athletic facilities, and a beach are some of the many attractions of the park.

Weaknesses

- *Political will to allow HMCA to manage park instead of the City of Detroit.*
- *Potential fee for park users.*
There are more options for entrance fees than a simple uniform charge-at-the-door. Fees may be waived for Detroit residents or lower income residents. A voluntary donation may substitute a mandatory fee, such as those that occur in many museums. Lastly, an entrance fee may be waived all together for this particular park because of its many other revenue generating features.

Weaknesses of the Other Potential Sites

Riverside Park

- *Displaces potential future commercial and residential development along the water front.*
As the Rivertown, Corktown, and Mexicantown communities expand, demand for river front property will increase. Riverside Park will make it impossible for developers to create the area into an attractive, economically dynamic area.
- *No health benefits.*
The Riverside Park provides no area for group recreational activities such as basketball or soccer.

Fort Wayne

- *Decrepit surrounding neighborhood.*
The neighborhood of Delray is a faltering, failing neighborhood. Suburbanites and surely many Detroiters avoid the neighborhood out of safety fears and lack of any entertainment activity whatsoever. Therefore, a refurbished Fort Wayne will face a severe challenge in trying to attract users who are wary of traveling through bad neighborhoods. Furthermore, without any activity to enhance, Fort Wayne can do little by itself to revitalize the Delray community.

State Fairgrounds

- *Too far away from downtown core.*
Revitalization efforts in Detroit focus on downtown, and for good reason. Downtown is the area in Detroit that has the most mixed-usage of any area in the city. The State Fairgrounds will stand alone as an economic activity in the area and will have little to no positive benefit on the surrounding communities. Commuters will arrive and leave the Fairgrounds without venturing beyond the parking lot landscape of the site because it is situated on 8 Mile Road, a major throughway, and near a number of highways in the region.

Lobbying Strategies

Interest Groups

After hearing from all the Interest Groups, all but one group ranked Belle Isle as their third or fourth park choice. The only group (and just one faction of the group, at that) to support Belle Isle as its first choice was the Health group. It is quite clear that garnering the support of Interest Groups is unlikely at best. However, there is still hope, as Interest Groups don't vote in the first round of voting!

Detroit Commissioners

Due to the highly politicized nature of Belle Isle, in the case of a tie-breaking vote, Detroit Commissioners are unlikely to vote for Belle Isle. This just another reason why we must focus *all* our energy on the County Commissioner votes, avoiding the tie-breaking voice of Detroit Commissioners.

County Commissioners

As aforementioned, our most serious lobbying efforts must be directed at the County Commissioners. It is their opinions that count (in the first, and most important, vote, anyway). Though influenced by Interest Groups in their jurisdiction, the County Commissioners will make a decision based on what they think is best strategically for their county.

In some cases, the Commissioners do not think that contributing their county's tax dollars to a Detroit Metropark is in the best interest for their county. Livingston and Oakland are

two counties with this view. Belle Isle is the “underdog” park site. Commissioners who are not in favor of a Metropark at all will vote for Belle Isle in the hopes that, if the site passes to the next vote, the majority of voters will vote against it. Fortunately, this strategy is mistaken. In truth, most people will vote for any park over no park. Therefore, Belle Isle can still come through as the next Metropark location.

At this point, the best strategy is to garner support for Belle Isle from one more county that does not want a Metropark to be in Detroit. So far we’ve got Livingston and Oakland... with three, Belle Isle has a good chance of making it to the final vote.