

## Youth/Education Interest Group Position Paper

### Ford School Integrated Policy Exercise 2004 Detroit Urban Revitalization

#### Goal

Our interest group strives to improve the lives of youth through educational and recreational activities and facilities that develop the following:

- Academic performance
- Learning opportunities
- Physical and emotional well being
- Overall lifestyle

#### Analysis Points

Our interest group identified the following issues of importance and relevance to further our goals:

- **Neighborhood Revitalization:** How well will the surrounding area support or potentially support a park in terms of safety for children and desirability of activities?
- **Racial & Economic Integration:** What possibilities exist for youth to have exposure to the diversity of the region?
- **Possibility for After-School Activities:** Are there potential opportunities for various after-school activities?
- **Useable Facilities:** What are the current and potential facilities and their possible uses for youth learning and recreation?
- **Access:** How easily can the park be accessed by the broadest amount of the regional population?
- **Cultural Value:** What possibilities exist for cultural exchange and development?
- **Ability to Improve Academic Achievement/Learning Dynamic:** Will the park include dynamic opportunities for learning?
- **Political Considerations & Feasibility:** Is the proposal politically possible within the constituency of youth advocates?
- **Costs:** Have the proper costs been considered to accommodate for the needs of youth?

#### General Proposal Preferences

Our interest group believes that both the State Fairgrounds and Fort Wayne proposals offer the greatest possibilities for fulfilling our ultimate goal of serving youth educational, developmental, and recreational needs. We will make a final decision on which will be our primary choice after the completion of the public hearings. At this point, we will decide which park proposal has the greatest advocacy base overall.

## **Advantages & Disadvantages by Proposal**

### **1. State Fairgrounds**

Advantages:

- Ample facilities
- Central regional location
- Accessible to public transportation
- Diverse economic and neighborhood areas
- Historical significance to Detroit Metro region and state
- Politically feasible
- Ample parking
- Existing athletic activities: Detroit hockey team practices, etc.

Disadvantages:

- No statewide draw on a consistent basis but with a regional draw
- “Beautification” needed
- Distance from downtown Detroit

### **2. Fort Wayne**

Advantages:

- Historical and Military Significance (Listed on the National Register of Historic Places)
- Cultural Importance (Last remaining Native American Burial Ground in Southeast Michigan)
- In close proximity to fast growing immigrant communities
- South of parade grounds exists a well received public boat launch and pier
- Conducive to broad educational, cultural, and recreational uses with the historic buildings, riverfront property and land for athletic fields
- Potential to draw visitors from across the state

Disadvantages:

- Much of surrounding land vacant, abandoned, or underutilized
- Low-income neighborhood could not afford major fees to support the park
- Perception of this area of town could dissuade some people from visiting.
- Will require major support to function well (but Detroit Historic Museum, DHM, is closed and in disrepair)
- Cost – most expensive proposal
- Possibly long revitalization process

### **3. Belle Isle**

Advantages:

- Famous structures
- Historical Significance
- Popularity as “Jewel of Detroit”
- Region
- Many recreational possibilities
- Access to water/riverfront

Disadvantages:

- Cost
- Access
- Buildings in disrepair
- Minimum added value (park is already used extensively)
- Politically unfeasible (Detroit won't give up control)
- Educational benefits but not highly accessible to youth

#### **4. Riverfront**

The Riverfront proposal is not feasible to the goals of our constituency. This proposal does not add anything for youth in terms of education and real youth development. The park is too small and is really a city park as opposed to a true metro region park. As a result, we cannot support this proposal.

#### **Conclusion**

We reiterate that at this time we do not have a preference between the Fort Wayne and State Fairgrounds proposals and feel either of these will further our goals of improving the lives of youth in the Detroit Metropolitan region. We rank the Belle Isle proposal after these two choices, mostly resulting from the political roadblocks inherent in such a proposal. Finally, we cannot support the Riverfront proposal since we are not convinced it will truly address the needs of the youth of the Detroit Metropolitan region.

#### **Group Members**

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