



Fact Sheet: Glass City Riverwalk

Project: Metroparks Toledo's new Glass City Riverwalk project

Goal: The Glass City Riverwalk project (GCR) will turn abandoned, underutilized or formerly industrial land (brownfields) into a five-mile-long public greenway accessible to all. Breathing new life into the riverfront through a conservation-first approach, GCR will eventually connect six neighborhoods on both sides of the Maumee River.

Square Footage: 300 acres connected through a five-mile multi-use trail

Projected Timeline: The decade-long undertaking is scheduled to be completed in 2030. The next section of development, funded by a federal grant, will be completed in spring 2025, with future phases currently in design. Finished phases include the Glass City Metropark (phase one) and unique play areas, a 1,000-foot-long ice skating trail, a restaurant, a community center and a bridge connecting two parks (phase two). The next phase, now underway, will include extending the Riverwalk on both sides of the river, including a scenic cove with river access and a spiral bridge linking a downtown green space with a drawbridge over the river. Subsequent parts of the project include additional interactive community activities and greening of brownfield spaces along a five-mile trail that will connect six neighborhoods.

Winning Legacy: Metroparks Toledo has been consistently recognized over the past decade for its focus on natural areas preservation and innovative concepts for engaging people in nature. In February 2024, Glass City Metropark was awarded the 14th Annual Governor's Award for Parks and Recreation presented by Ohio Parks and Recreation Association. Metroparks Toledo is the first two-time winner of the award, established to recognize one project, program or event that has had the most significant impact on quality of life in the preceding year.

Design: SmithGroup (GCR phase 1 & 2)
Colliers Engineering and Consulting Design Firm and WXY Architecture + Urban Design (BUILD Transportation Grant)
MKSK (International Park)
The Collaborative (Glass City Enrichment Center)
Tetra Tech and Edge Group (Vistula)
Buehrer Group Architecture and Engineering and Lewandowski (Urban Camping)

Other Consultants: DGL, West Erie Reality, Mannik Smith



Construction: Kokosing Construction Company (GCR-BUILD, MLK Boardwalk)
The Lathrop Co. (Glass City Metropark (GCR phase 1 & 2 and GCEC))

Partnerships: Glass City Riverwalk is the result of public-private partnerships involving local, state and federal government entities, non-profit organizations, businesses and residents.

Fast Facts:

- **200,000 visits**
Times people visited the new Glass City Metropark (within the GCR) in the first three months of operation, making it the most popular of the 19 Metroparks in Lucas County.
- **\$225 million initiative**
More than \$167 million in funding has been secured thus far.
- **\$1 billion**
Projected economic impact to the region resulting from the GCR.
- **5 miles**
The regional park system's expanded conservation efforts have resulted in a park within five miles of every home in the county.

Features: The Glass City Riverwalk is designed to engage people in year-round outdoor activities across socio-economic and community lines, including:

- Glass City Metropark, a 70-acre park with 15,000 linear feet of trails, 17 acres of trees, a 27-acre prairie and more than 3,000 linear feet of improved shoreline.
- The Ribbon, a 1,000-foot-long ice skating trail in the winter and roller skating zone in the warmer months.
- The Grosbeak Discovery Play area, an adventure play node with a double zip line, custom slides, as well as rock and log climbing opportunities.



- A Prairie + Pollinator Discovery Play area is a dynamic play experience inspired by the flora and fauna of the region; later, a ‘prairie maze’ will be mown into the meadow.
- The Mini Maumee Discovery Play Area, a one-of-a-kind water play experience features a scaled depiction of the Maumee River and serves as an interactive teaching tool.
- The Cove + Adventure Boardwalk, a former commercial marina redesigned as a naturalized cove for kayaking, is enclosed by a boardwalk and scenic overlooks.
- Market Hall, a 9,500-square-foot park building that is home to a restaurant, beer garden, equipment rentals, restrooms and lockers, as well as event space.
- Glass City Enrichment Center (GCEC), a welcoming space that fosters engagement will serve as a key access point for a range of youth and adult programs offered by Metroparks Toledo and community partners.

Funding and Support: In November 2002, the voters of Lucas County approved a 2 mill property tax levy to fund approximately half the cost of Glass City Metropark and Riverwalk. Additional support comes from the private and public sectors, with more than \$167 million secured of the total \$225 million initiative. \$110 million of that funding is from public levy support, while \$40 million is derived from local, state and federal grants, including a \$23 million grant from the United States Department of Transportation via the BUILD program.

Projected Economic Impact: Glass City Riverwalk will be a key economic driver for the region, creating jobs, attracting local development and enhancing livability for residents. It is estimated to generate \$1 billion in economic impact to the region through private construction, increased property values and new business opportunities.

Backstory: The community debated for decades about how to transform a former industrial site beside Toledo’s riverfront from a blighted relic of the city’s past into an asset for the future. Several times, developers announced plans that would quickly fade away, leaving only a street lined with decorative lampposts that locals derided as “the road to nowhere.”

In 2017, Toledo-based healthcare system ProMedica had the opportunity to acquire the property from overseas investors then sold a portion of the land to a developer and the



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majority to Metroparks Toledo. In the final days of 2020, the first portion of Glass City Metropark opened. It was the first major public investment in the aging East Toledo neighborhood in a generation, and it set the stage for bigger improvements to come in remaking the nearly forgotten waterfront into one of northwest Ohio's signature attractions.

Historical details: The project team took care to reference the natural and cultural history of the land through design details. "The Ladles" is an art installation made from large vessels used at a steel mill that once occupied the site. A colorful, 50-foot-tall "Beacon Tower" resembles the smokestacks of a power plant that once stood at one end of the site. An interpretive sign includes a photo of Elvis, who performed in a sports arena that occupied the opposite end of the property. Large stones used for seating on the event lawn were part of an aqueduct in a canal system that once traveled through the city.

About Metroparks Toledo

Metroparks Toledo protects the northwest Ohio community's natural resources by using public dollars responsibly to conserve, preserve and restore areas that provide remarkable environmental and economic value. Parks and open space benefit the community by helping clean the air and water, retain stormwater, provide essential habitat for wildlife and enhance property values. More than six million times a year, people choose to spend time in a Toledo Metropark.

Metroparks Toledo was the recipient of the 2020 National Gold Medal Award for excellence in parks and recreation management, the most prestigious honor in the parks and recreation industry.

About SmithGroup

[SmithGroup](#) is one of the world's preeminent integrated design firms. Working across a network of 20 offices in the U.S. and China, a team of 1,300 experts is committed to excellence in strategy, design and delivery. The scale of the firm's thinking and organization produces partnerships with forward-looking clients that maximize opportunities, minimize risk and solve their most complex problems. SmithGroup creates exceptional design solutions for healthcare, science and technology organizations, higher education and cultural institutions, urban environments, diverse workplaces, mixed-use and waterfront developments, and parks and open spaces.

SmithGroup is frequently recognized by leading organizations in the field, including American Institute of Architects, American Planning Association, American Society of Landscape Architects, Illuminating Engineering Society and Urban Land Institute.



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Media Contact:

Emma Caro

President

Blue Water Communications

800-975-3212

emma@bluewatercommunications.biz