



# Blue Water River Walk



Community Foundation of St. Clair County

## The Vision

During the Fall of 2010 the Community Foundation convened a series of focus groups to re-envision what this stretch of St. Clair River shoreline could become. To facilitate the process the Foundation retained the services of the firm JJR out of Ann Arbor. They are the premier waterfront planning and design firm in America, and are responsible for the vision and reality of the new Detroit Riverfront and River Walk.

This visioning process included a half-day tour of the Detroit Riverfront for a busload of 50 residents and friends of the Foundation. By early 2011 the input and dreams of these stakeholders had been tweaked, refined, put into a master plan and approved by the Trustees of the Community Foundation. Several components of the plan reaffirm the original dreams of Acheson Ventures and give the Community Foundation reassurance that the voice of the public has been heard and understood. As the Community Foundation moves forward it will follow these guiding principles:

- This is a long-term, multi-year initiative that requires patience and perseverance.
- Public access in perpetuity is an obligation
- Restoration of natural plant and wildlife habitat where possible
- Restoration, or “softening” of the shoreline to return it to a more natural state
- Success will require collaboration with other stakeholders
- Allowing a section of the Bridge to Bay Trail to be built along the shoreline
- A permanent endowment fund dedicated to the River Walk will be required

There is no firm date when we expect this project to be completed. But since the Community Foundation was created in 1944 we have learned that ultimately, success comes to those who believe, those who persevere, and those who can leverage resources and talent for the common good.



## The History

For almost 100 years the incredible piece of waterfront property, now known as Desmond Landing, was an industrial wasteland. From around 1907 until the late 1990's this stretch of St. Clair River shoreline was home to train yards, scrap yards, factories, a cement plant and industrial shipping and services.

During the 1800's and into the 1900's our American industry relied heavily on water for transportation. The shores of the St. Clair River were an inviting

opportunity. If it weren't for a family named Acheson, the property which has now become a tourist attraction and opportunity for economic development, might still be a toxic stretch of vacant land.

Over the last twelve years, Jim Acheson and his company, Acheson Ventures, have invested millions of dollars to acquire, clear and clean the land. Beautiful new buildings like the Blue Water YMCA and Harborside Office Center, have been built far off the water's edge and bring workers, tourists and visitors to the waterfront on a daily basis.

Desmond Landing stretches for almost a mile along the St. Clair River, beginning at the mouth of the Black River. It encompasses more than 70 acres of what is now prime waterfront property. To ensure that this shoreline never becomes an industrial wasteland again, Mr. Acheson is donating almost the entire shoreline to the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. It's one of the most impressive gifts (among many) that Mr. Acheson has made, and it begins a new era for this riverfront property, our region, and the Community Foundation.