

My name is Mark Wallace. I'm working on transforming the Detroit riverfront into a beautiful series of parks. I love to see potential in things and help that potential become a reality. I come from a family of teachers and ministers, and in both cases I think you see people who like to find opportunities. In the ministry you are trying to find people who have an opportunity to transform their lives. In education, you're trying to teach people how to be different or how to think differently or how to do different things. So I think those two threads, my family have really influenced who I am.

But when I was in 8th grade, I did a skills test and it said that I would like to read a lot. I like to be myself. I like to be outdoors. So they suggested that I should be a parking lot attendant. So it's kind of funny that I'm running a park system today. When I was a little kid, I lived in Hillsdale, Michigan, which is a college town. And the biggest moment of my life was getting my first bicycle. And my mom said, you got to be home when the sets. Otherwise, you're on your own.

A lot of people live really isolated lives today, and it's really sad for me to see. My family was the place where all the kids would hang on the backyard. We always had people over for dinner. My parents were always picking up stray cats and dogs at church and bringing them home on Sunday afternoon. And, you know, that's how we got to know. People know the world.

Detroit is a really big city and a lot of people here are very, very isolated, not only just your senior citizens who don't have good transportation and can't get out of the house, but kids and families for good reason, they've chosen not to know their neighbors very well. The strongest parts of our city are those places where people are starting to pull together... and the RiverWalk is one of those spots. You know, this is a place where everyone wants to

show up... it's a place where everyone wants to get together. And it's a good reminder of how cool life is when people are occupying the same space. It doesn't happen that often in our town and I'm really excited this is one of the spots that it happens every day.