

# Allen Park

T O D A Y

2021 - Third Quarter



## Inside Motor City Landmark

Does the Uniroyal Tire  
have a future?

## Welcome to Team AP!

New school staff  
ready to roll

## The Boys of Summer

Two AP students are  
Taylor North champs

Support Our  
**LOCAL BUSINESSES!**



## From the Mayor

### It's Up To You!

Welcome to the fall edition of *Allen Park Today*. Rather than talking about upcoming events, which are well publicized in this edition, I would like to take this opportunity to reach out to you and ask that you **Get Involved!**



All too often, and I was guilty of this in the past, we comment on things going on in the community, feeling free to express our thoughts and opinions about what should be done, why things shouldn't be done and asking why things aren't being done – all without having the facts; without having any knowledge of issues and all of the work and effort going on behind the scenes.

As I said, I was one of those, and then I stepped up, and in doing so my understanding and knowledge expanded. I was more involved with the community – with concerns, processes, limitations, laws, rules, regulations, etc., etc.

**Get Involved** – Volunteer to serve on one or two of the City's Boards or Commissions. An application is on our website. While there are no current openings, terms expire every year and the opportunity to be appointed exists.

**Get Involved** – Check the various City and Commission Facebook pages for volunteer opportunities and events. Get to know the members of the Beautification Commission, newly re-established after a long hiatus. They are active in making our city a more appealing place and welcome any and all help. Check out local organizations who can use a helping hand with food distribution or fundraising events.

**Get Involved** – attend Council meetings and work sessions so you actually know what is being planned and discussed.

**Get Involved** – Be part of the solution. You can keep Allen Park Strong. It's up to you! Enjoy your city, enjoy life.

Gail McLeod, Mayor

# Allen Park T O D A Y

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# WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

## Allen Park's iconic Giant Tire – its history and its future

By Terry Jacoby

Like the Gateway Arch in St. Louis or the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Detroit has its own unique landmark that leaves no doubt where you are. Nothing better defines the giant dreams, giant visions and giant contributions of the Motor City than the Uniroyal Giant Tire located along I-94 in Allen Park.

The Motor City could have never gotten out of the garage without tires and the Uniroyal Giant Tire symbolizes that not only did Detroit roar down the road of automotive innovation, it changed the world in the process.

The largest non-production tire scale model ever built, and one of the world's largest roadside attractions, the tire was created as a Ferris wheel by the United States Rubber Co. (now Uniroyal) for the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

Demolition of The Giant Tire's Ferris wheel started in January 1966 and was completed in May 1966. The tire was then shipped to Detroit, where it was reassembled without its passenger gondolas. The Ferris wheel section ended up at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, N.J.

The Allen Park property was specifically chosen for the company's Midwest Management Center as part of a contingency plan to relocate The Giant Tire in case they could not find a suitable trustee by the time demolition was required.

Michelin North America owns the Uniroyal brand name, and all assets of Uniroyal Goodrich. The company continues to own the 4.25 acre site where the Uniroyal Giant Tire sits.

For Uniroyal, the tire represents "community" and "longevity."

"Our Uniroyal Giant Tire symbolizes the longevity of the brand," said Uniroyal Brand Director Jay Wright. "At Michelin, we enjoy being a part of the community, and we will continue to showcase the tire in unique ways."

No one knows more about The Giant Tire than local businessman and historian Steven J. Frey, who published a book titled, *The Giant Tire: From New York World's Fair to Detroit Landmark*. While he doesn't work for Uniroyal-Michelin, the company considers him a "great ambassador" and its expert when it comes to the Uniroyal Giant Tire.

Frey, who lives in Dearborn Heights, recently answered some questions for *Allen Park Today*.

**Q:** First, why did you write the book?

**A:** With the rise in popularity of social media, I am fascinated how people will repeat rumors, speculation and third-hand knowledge without knowing the facts. The Giant Tire is a great example. I spent 13 months researching The Giant Tire and I am 100 percent confident in the information.

**Q:** What is one "giant" inaccuracy when it comes to The Giant Tire?

**A:** It is quite often described as weighing 10 or 12 tons. This is impossible, as the U.S. Rubber original press release stated that the exterior fiberglass skin was 8.75 tons. There is no way the internal steel structure only weighs 3 tons. When it was being offered free to any takers in 1966, newspapers reported it was 100 tons. It is unknown what its current weight is, but it is definitely closer to 100 than it is to 10.





**Q:** There are some interesting myths or urban legends associated with The Giant Tire. What are a few you uncovered in your research?

**A:** One is that the Shah of Iran rode the Ferris wheel – he did not. Another one is that it was shipped by rail – it was not. According to the Townsend Sign Co., it was shipped via 21 trucks. Others include that a family lived in the tire (false) and that it broke loose and rolled across the highway (impossible).

**Q:** It was originally built as a Ferris wheel. Can you tell us about that?

**A:** It was built for the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. It was designed with 24 gondolas that could carry four people at a time (96 total). The ride cost 50 cents and lasted 10 minutes. It was very popular – a two-and-a-half-hour wait was typical. It has never operated as a Ferris wheel at its current location. The Ferris wheel portion was not moved to Michigan.

**Q:** Why do you think it's such an iconic symbol of Detroit?

**A:** First, it represents the automotive industry. The “Big Three” were (and still are) headquartered in Metro Detroit. Second, it is a large landmark, and actually one of the few that we have.

**Q:** Do you believe it will still be there in 100 years?

**A:** I don't think it will survive another 100 years, partly because of its construction. The outer fiberglass panels are not sealed, so the interior steel framework is vulnerable to corrosion. In 2003, Michelin spent \$1 million to replace 30 interior steel beams, repair the deteriorating base and improve drainage around the site. There is no telling what its condition may be in another 100 years, or how much money would need to be spent to maintain it.



# THE GIANT TIRE

From New York World's Fair to Detroit Landmark



**Q:** Have there ever been plans to take it down?

**A:** Yes, rather than spending the \$1 million to fix the landmark in 2003, as part of the I-94 corridor revitalization project, Michelin first advertised for bids for its demolition. At least one local company that was asked to quote the job also provided a quote to repair it, and explained to Michelin (based in South Carolina) how much The Giant Tire meant to the people of Michigan, and that it would be a mistake to destroy a Motor City landmark. It worked!