



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

SUPPORTING LASTING CIVIC
CAPACITY IN DETROIT

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

SUPPORTING LASTING CIVIC CAPACITY IN DETROIT

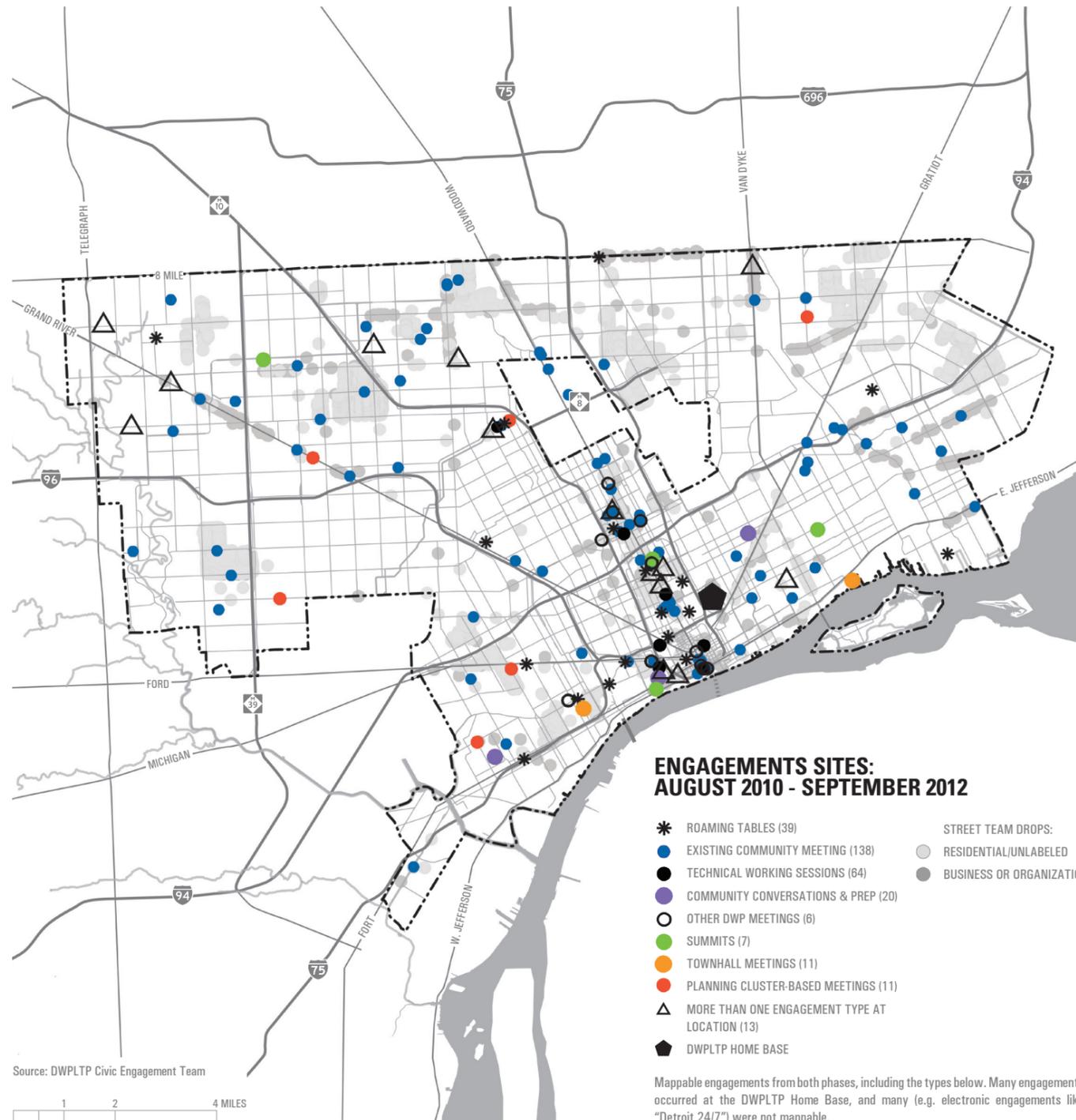
RENEWED WAYS TO LEAD AND COLLABORATE. Detroit is above all a city that makes things, and Detroiters can make things happen. There is no shortage of talented people in Detroit who dedicate their lives to making it a better place. They are neighbors, leaders, dreamers, and doers. You may be one of them: a Neighborhood Watch captain or foot patrol, a troop leader or teen leader, a teacher or police or fire/paramedic, a city employee who sees a practical solution, a shop steward with ideas for daycare at your factory, a deacon with a dream for a civic plaza, an entrepreneur who helps develop a thriving business corridor. You may have knowledge of or access to ideas, data, networks of individuals and institutions, or financial resources. Augmenting and leveraging people's assets, resources, perspectives, and participation is what this section of the Detroit Strategic Framework is all about.

Civic "infrastructure" can be considered an intrinsic system for the city of Detroit. It is an abundant asset that, like Detroit's physical systems, has been stressed and burdened by economic and population losses, deferred or inconsistent maintenance, and a lack of renewal. To put it in more human terms: **Detroiters should be recognized as our most precious asset, and the capacity and vibrancy of individuals and institutions deserve support and renewal.** This civic infrastructure—strong residents, strong leaders, strong organizations, and strong sectors—will enable Detroit to make ongoing, continual progress on pervasive, long-term community issues, such as public safety, equitable job access, education, or health.

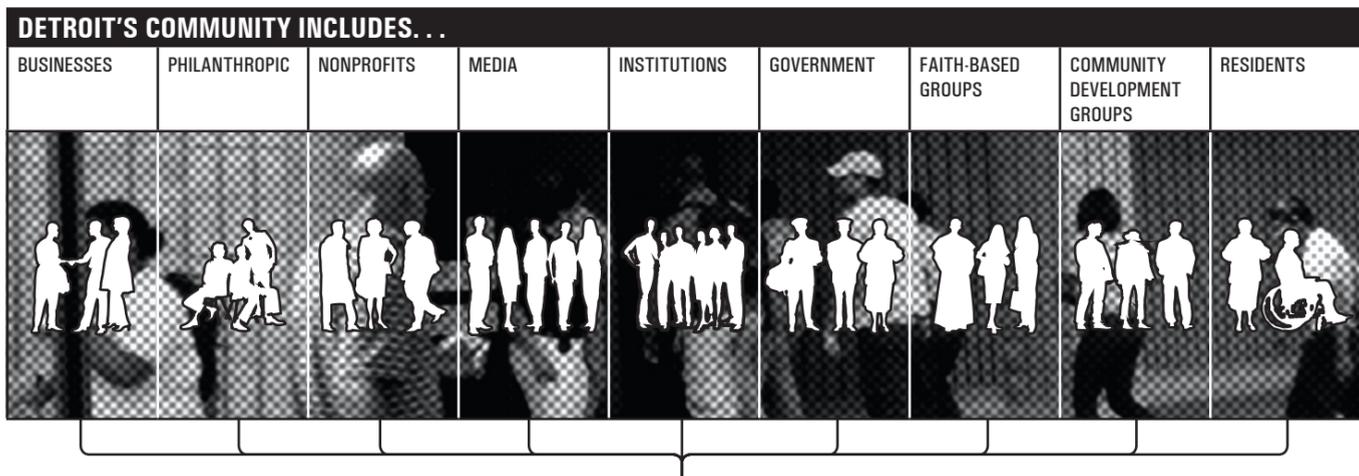
WHAT EXACTLY IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT? Civic engagement is the open and ongoing two-way dialogue among all stakeholders. Essentially, civic engagement is people working together and talking together to move forward together. It entails transparency, accountability, and mutual trust. Civic engagement moves people along a spectrum of support. For some, becoming more engaged means less resistance or fear toward an idea or an initiative. For others, engagement means moving from passive indifference to active involvement or advocacy. Engagement can fuel the passion of still others to be the leaders and outspoken champions for their specific cause or a shared idea, lending their resources and skills as well as bringing others on board. A civic engagement effort is often most successful when it involves a broad range of communities and sectors in conversation, relationship building, idea generation, decision making, and action.

The many valuable definitions and forms of civic engagement prompted the Detroit Works Project Long Term Planning process to adopt a broad understanding of community, including residents, businesses, government, nonprofit, civic, institutional, members of the media, philanthropic, and faith-based groups. The broad concept of 'community' also includes but is not limited to communities based on race, age, culture, ethnicity, and gender.

Engagement is not only something that happens within and for individuals and neighborhoods, and is not only something defined in geographic terms. Engagement exists where there are shared values or a common issue at stake; something that is of deep concern to community stakeholders. Sometimes engaging or organizing around an issue (such as equitable job access or education) is appropriate, while other times engaging particular constituencies (such as the faith community, large corporate employers, health professionals, or the higher education sector) is important. Still other times, engaging by geographic area (such as neighborhood, small business corridor, or multi-county region) is needed. Any given engagement effort should consider these or other groupings at different times in order to be effective and responsive to how people identify themselves within their communities.



Mappable engagements from both phases, including the types below. Many engagements occurred at the DWPLTP Home Base, and many (e.g. electronic engagements like "Detroit 24/7") were not mappable.



WHY ENGAGE? Civic engagement yields lasting benefits. This is true of any development endeavor or long-term initiative, including the Detroit Strategic Framework. Here’s why: First, civic engagement helps strengthen and expand the base of support for a given effort. More people become informed, activated and mobilized through engagement efforts. Opposition is less likely because concerns are addressed within the process. Secondly, engagement creates and empowers leaders who will advocate for and advance an effort. The more champions there are for a plan or an idea, the more likely it is to become a reality. Third, civic engagement strengthens collaboration and connections. It helps pave the way for long-term sustainability of an effort by increasing visibility, credibility, buy-in, accountability, and ownership of solutions and bright ideas. Fourth, civic engagement often nurtures and reinforces a strong connection to place and a sense of identity. Essentially, by engaging in something together, people can witness and feel a shared energy and commitment. Involvement feels rewarding, and the possibility of change and progress excites communities.

Lastly, and perhaps most significantly for the Strategic Framework, civic engagement actually improves the substance or content of an initiative. An effort that has been supported by civic engagement will more accurately reflect the ideas of the people it affects, and helps them raise their voices to influence outcomes. It responds to present-day needs and priorities while incorporating a valuable range of perspectives and expertise.

For all of these reasons, creating a sustained environment of strong civic fabric and a vibrant civic identity will not only enable the Strategic Framework to become a reality, but it also will allow Detroit to incubate and carry out successful efforts and initiatives well into the future.

Such engagement does not just “happen,” however. It requires deliberate and targeted investments and efforts by nonprofit organizations, the philanthropic sector, and public and private sectors to learn about it, support it, and initiate it. It also calls for individual leaders to be cultivated and equipped to forge and strengthen connections among constituencies, neighborhoods, organizations, and/or sectors. And finally, it requires all of us to create an atmosphere of trust, respect, shared goals, and mutual responsibility.

Everyone who has dedicated time to the future of Detroit—both within and beyond the city limits—is aware that too many excellent and civic-minded ideas and actions go unrecognized or under-funded because of lack of connections and coordination among all the groups and individuals who are working on solutions for the city. Supporting and investing in a strong civic and cultural fabric creates an enduring asset for Detroit’s long-term development and prosperity. When a city’s people are strongly connected with each other—active in civic life, focused on shared values, equipped to lead change, and committed to developing healthy and vibrant local institutions and businesses—the city becomes stronger and more sustainable. Engagement is not solely a vehicle to implement and govern change. It is also an outcome and a transformation in and of itself.

CIVIC & POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS



PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT IN DWP



INFORMATION OUTLETS



CONTEXT AND GROUNDING

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS AND SURPASSING BARRIERS

Youth are a particularly critical engagement asset in the Detroit community. First, youth represents a significant proportion of the city's population. There were as many as one in four Detroiters under the age of 17 in 2009¹. Secondly, many young people hunger for creative ways to engage, and they often initiate innovative actions for developing community. The Detroit Works Project Long Term Planning witnessed this through the robust participation of youth in our Detroit 24/7 online game and engagement platform. And finally, young people make up the civic engagement infrastructure of the future. When youth are civically engaged, they are more likely to graduate from high school. If engagement efforts can capture their energy, imagination, and ideas now, they will not only succeed as adults, but they can continue to invigorate these ideas in Detroit for decades to come.

Many historic challenges affect civic engagement in Detroit. For instance, the history of civic engagement in the city has been plagued with planning fatigue, leaving many residents and leaders with a sense of hopelessness and skepticism. A legacy of corruption in the city has given rise to common attitudes of mistrust. The magnitude of the problems has also engendered feelings of disconnection and immobilization, as well as a sense that the public sector alone cannot inadequately meet public needs. "We're tired of talking" has been a common sentiment. On the flip side, there are many in Detroit who have felt far removed from past planning efforts: "No one asked me" is also commonly heard. Linked with these sentiments is a perceived gradual erosion of the sense of belonging and commitment to a place for many in Detroit over the past several decades. Even as many residents continue to express their hometown pride and commitment to Detroit, people leave the city in high numbers. For some, hope and resolve have waned.

Complex and systemic racial dynamics also represent a significant hurdle for civic engagement, as do challenging realities such as high adult illiteracy, pronounced economic disparity, and the complexity and inaccessibility of many public services—the "red tape" often encountered in trying to access or engage with bureaucratic systems. In addition, there are frequently acknowledged capacity challenges within local nonprofit organizations, community-based groups, and public agencies alike for initiating and leading civic engagement efforts, not least of which are fueled by strained financial and staffing resources. While many of these challenges are not unique to Detroit, they underscore the imperative for investment and attention toward reinvigorating civic life, stimulating collective action, and supporting leadership across sectors in the city.

Realities Sources: 1) City Planning Commission (CPC); 2-4) CPC, Michigan Community Resources (MCR); 5-7) MCR; 7-9) DWPLTP Civic Engagement Team; 10) MCR; 11) DWPLTP Civic Engagement Team

*The ten foundations are: 1) Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan; 2) Ford Foundation; 3) John A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation; 4) Hudson-Webber Foundation; 5) John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; 6) Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation; 7) McGregor Fund; 8) Kresge Foundation; 9) Skillman Foundation; 10) W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Text Source: 1) Data Driven Detroit



Still, Detroit also clearly has a long history of unique and valuable engagement assets. The city has a legacy of strong union organizing, particularly in the automobile industry. Detroit was once called The City of Churches, and the faith community includes trusted, prominent, and respected leaders that often serve as a galvanizing force. Networks of community development groups advocate for stable and rooted neighborhoods, and a variety of nonprofit organizations provide critical support and outreach to Detroit residents even in the face of constrained resources. Although there is a significant digital divide in the City of Detroit, there is nonetheless a vibrant digital culture that is addressing the divide and leading new ways of civic engagement. Environmental groups, food security advocates, and urban farming projects lead the nation in community organizing around green innovation. Other institutions engage the current and future workforce through their work to strengthen education and provide training opportunities. Vibrant arts organizations and cultural institutions engage communities through a variety of creative means and platforms. The list of people-driven assets in Detroit goes on.

On a business level, many companies and leaders work vigorously to engage their colleagues and develop a vital and energetic entrepreneurial environment in the city. On a governmental level, the new City Charter and the new seven-district Council system suggest fertile ground for establishing a renewed sense of place and belonging, which should also secure stronger and deeper engagement between the community and their local representatives in city government. This in turn holds promise for strong links between neighborhood issues and concerns, along with citywide priorities. Community is calling for stronger alignment and accountability between municipal and other levels of government. And from the philanthropic sector, the city has seen renewed interest and investments in engagement. These are all positive steps forward for building sustainable civic capacity.

In addition to its rich legacy of groups, institutions, and sectors that have pioneered engagement, organizing, and advocacy efforts in past decades that continue to the present day, Detroit is full of important informal engagement entities that knit together communities and create a strong sense of city identity. Detroit block clubs and other informal groups, led by many resourceful residents, drive clean-up and beautification projects, neighborhood-watch efforts, and numerous other examples of neighbor-to-neighbor care and connectivity. Informal civic structures such as small businesses ("the beauty and barber shop,") neighborhood places ("playground, sidewalk, and store"), and emerging digital communities such as Facebook and Twitter (especially important for young people) can be overlooked as models of engagement precisely because they are so natural and every day. This recognition was part of what drove the Strategic Framework process to engage with Detroiters where they already gather, through a series of strategies that mobilized conversations, invited stories, and took the dialogue out of the meeting room and into the streets.

Other informal networks are more interest-based, and may not initially appear to be the strongholds for change that they can be. Throughout Detroit, local heroes have emerged from among car and motorcycle clubs, groups of street artists, and the sometimes serendipitous groups that share values they have not yet realized, such as skateboarders and trail or park-improvement advocates, maternal-child wellness advocates and urban gardeners, or a safety patrol and a mural artist who both have part of the answer to reducing gang "tagging."



ENGAGING ALL OF DETROIT TO CREATE A NEW FUTURE CITY. Civic engagement once worked to move social mountains in Detroit. In the 20th century, it was Detroit that set the stage for important national conversations about social issues related to job equity, environmental justice, and the fraught relationship between workers and corporate management in the United States.

Over the decades there has been a distinct change in civic participation. In the face of declining city resources and population losses, Detroit residents and community groups have had to fill the gap in quality-of-life needs such as safety, education, and jobs. Now, Detroiters are demanding dramatic improvements in quality of life and quality of business. Real investment of human and financial resources is needed in all sectors to rebuild capacity so that civic engagement is part of the day-to-day infrastructure of how Detroit operates and makes decisions at a citywide level, as well as how it participates in regional and statewide frameworks to address its future.

EMBRACING THE POTENTIAL FOR A MODEL CITY. The Strategic Framework is the vision that results from, is shaped by, and cannot be carried out without expanded and sustained civic engagement. Such an effort calls upon the combined—and enhanced—capacity of Detroit's civic leaders to support and extend their best efforts, not only within specific parts of Detroit nor just in the city itself, but with their peers in the Detroit metropolitan area, the state, and at the national level. This is not only because Detroit needs to connect with the broadest possible support and resources for its ambitious vision, but also because such resources will give Detroit the ability to give back: To show the world how to create a green, prosperous, and equitable city for the future.

The fact is that Detroit is facing head-on what many other cities are on the cusp of: the need to create more sustainable, resilient civic centers for the new millennium. The world needs Detroit's example. The country and the world also need Detroit's success, as a critical American city in the next-century global economy. No single sector can accomplish this alone. Detroit's civic groups and business leaders must collaborate to create the capacity for this important work. This work must balance the short- and medium-term solutions to urgent needs with the equally critical need to maintain a long-term vision and to commit to important, far-reaching priorities for Detroit's future. It necessitates sustained and sustaining working relationships that share and seek out knowledge, resources, and best practices within and beyond Detroit's city limits.

2010

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT TIMELINE

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ENGAGED TO DATE	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
	10	7,800	9,000	10,200	12,000
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soft Launch Meetings began with Citywide Partners to inform about the Detroit Strategic Framework Mayor's Advisory Task Force (MATF) formed Interagency Working Group formed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detroit Works Project launched Website created Soft Launch meetings continued Detroit Strategic Framework Community Forums (Townhall Meetings) Street Team launched to assist with literature drops for the Townhall Meetings Community Outreach Partners formed to assist with outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MATF meetings continued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MATF meetings continued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MATF meetings continued

2011

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
16,300	20,300	24,200	28,000	31,100	33,100	35,600	38,400	40,400	42,800	45,200	53,700
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Cluster-Based meetings began 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Cluster-Based meetings continued Summit planning initiated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Cluster-Based meetings continued Summit planning continued Senior Summit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summit planning continued Hotline launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith-based, New Americans, Environmental, Artist, Entrepreneur, and Youth Summits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internally evaluated the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructured DWP org chart Split DWP into two tracks - short term and long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assembled DWP long term consultant team Reviewed community feedback from 1.0 to inform 2.0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to review community feedback from 1.0 to inform 2.0 Recruited Process Leaders to help guide civic engagement Hired staff, developed civic engagement plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to review community feedback from 1.0 to inform 2.0 Continued to recruit Process Leaders to help guide civic engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to review community feedback from 1.0 to inform 2.0 Process Leaders' meetings began and continued through rest of the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DWP Long Term Planning launched Roaming Table deployed Street Team deployed Project Goals established First DWP 2.0 MATF meeting held

2012

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
65,300	69,000	74,600	81,900	90,000	104,400	108,700	130,500	163,600
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Base opened Ambassador Training began and continued through process Stakeholder Roundtables launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detroit Stories began and continued through process Introduction of Key Trends Introduction of 12 Imperatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Directions Phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning, City Systems, and Environment Toolkits made available Community Conversations began Introduction of Typologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Strategies Phase Detroit 24/7 launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone Town Hall Roaming Table and Street Team continued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting of Strategic Framework plan Speakers Bureau deployed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Base Open Houses Introduction of Strategic Framework Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling Road Show launched Community Conversations resumed Telephone Townhall

THE CONVERSATION

HOW THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK WAS JOINTLY DEVELOPED

Getting people to the table is hard. Getting people to remain at the table—to stay engaged—can be even more challenging. Communities and community leaders must juggle many urgent priorities that compete for their attention and time. Behind the problem of so-called “disengagement” usually lies a story of interactions that did not help build or sustain trust, efforts that ran aground for lack of resources or because of technical or practical barriers, or the sheer magnitude of a problem or problems overwhelming efforts to address it. Frequently, decisions move forward without the input of many community members whom these decisions most concern.

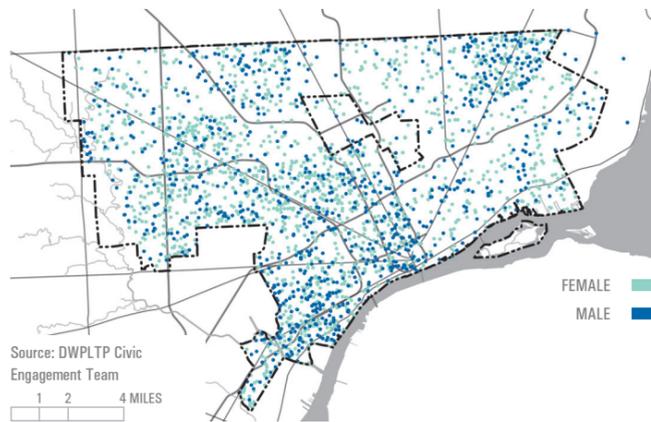
The Detroit Works Project—a 24-month community effort that led to the development of the Strategic Framework—set out with the ambitious goal of reaching as many Detroit community stakeholders as possible to engage them and help them shape important and timely issues for Detroit’s future. As part of this goal, the process aimed to rebuild enthusiasm and trust, create opportunities for community dialogue, and begin to lay the groundwork for future and long-term civic engagement work in Detroit. Using many approaches to extend and deepen the two-way conversation about desired actions and strategies, the process involved, tapped, and partnered with well over 150,000 individuals and organizations in total. This represents one of the most exciting, inventive, and comprehensive public planning processes in the United States and beyond.

HOW THE CONVERSATION STARTED: DETROIT WORKS PROJECT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS. The Detroit Works Project publicly began in September 2010 with the desire to rapidly plan and execute a wide array of meetings covering many geographic areas of the city. Since the first step was to introduce the project to the broad Detroit community, initial engagement happened through large “town hall meeting” gatherings. This initial round of engagement aimed to generate momentum and interest, and the volume of participation was inspiring and positive. It was clear that Detroiters were ready to engage in the process of citywide transformation.

These first forums aimed to provide a context for current realities and set the stage for input in plans for the city over the long term. At the same time, the attendance in the hundreds proved logistically challenging, and limited the kind of participation and dialogue that could take place. The DWP team members began to learn how to best prepare participants in advance for what to expect of the discussions, how to participate, and what would happen afterward. These initial engagement activities, which are common to many city engagement processes, were also large-scale, with City officials and technical experts presenting and then inviting input, questions, and comments. Although this helped ground the events in current data and also demonstrated the Mayor’s commitment to questions of land use and equitable development, it did not yet allow for interactive dialogue and participant-focused engagement.

The first set of community forums was immensely helpful in defining and shaping the 12 main imperatives of the Strategic Framework. Coming out of these meetings, it became clear that the community needed a space to also address urgent and near-term needs and questions. In response, the Detroit Works Project was reshaped in 2011 to reflect a separate process for addressing very immediate concerns in the community—spearheaded by the mayor’s office—and a more long-range process for arriving at a vision for the city with broad input from residents and business leaders. For the reshaping process, three core principles guided how engagement unfolded: 1) incorporating community leadership in engagement decision making; 2) providing transparent information exchange, including valuing and integrating community knowledge; and 3) using communications as a core part of engagement efforts. These three principles are elaborated on below.

ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WITHIN DETROIT WHO PROVIDED GENDER

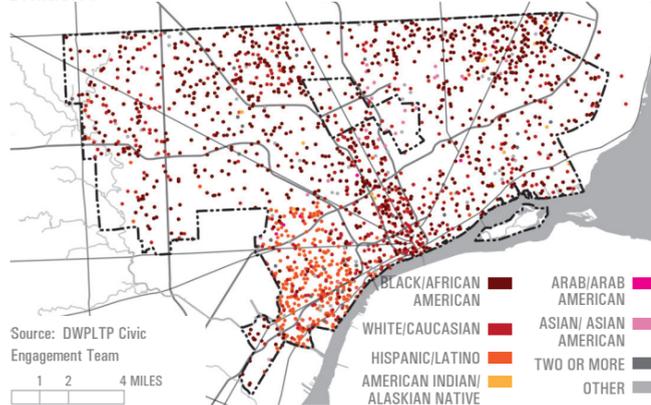


ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WHO PROVIDED GENDER, 61.5% FEMALE AND 38.5% MALE.

GENDER

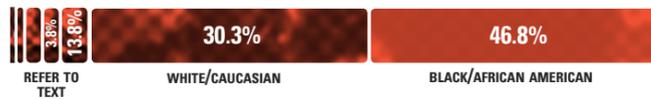


ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WITHIN DETROIT WHO PROVIDED RACE & ETHNICITY

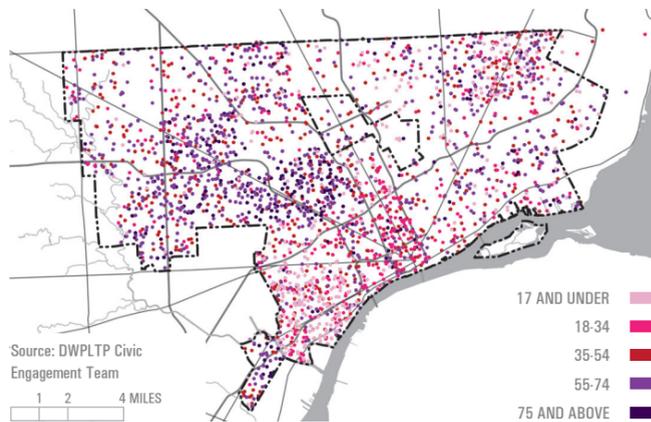


ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WHO PROVIDED RACE AND ETHNICITY, 46.8% BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN, 30.3% WHITE CAUCASIAN, 13.8% HISPANIC/LATINO, 3.8% OTHER, 2.1% ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN, 2.0% TWO OR MORE RACES, 0.8% AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE, 0.4% ARAB AMERICAN

RACE AND ETHNICITY

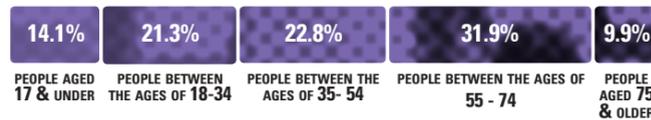


ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WITHIN DETROIT WHO PROVIDED AGE

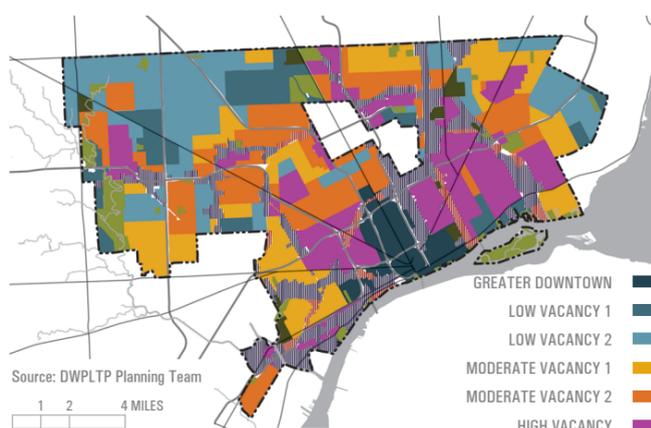


ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WHO PROVIDED AGE, 14.1% 17 YEARS AND UNDER, 21.3% EIGHTEEN YEARS AND UNDER, 22.8% 35-54 YEARS, 31.9% 55-74 YEARS, 9.9% 75 YEARS AND OLDER.

AGE



ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WITHIN DETROIT WHO PROVIDED GEOGRAPHY



ALL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WHO PROVIDED GEOGRAPHY, 11.3% HIGH VACANCY, 35.3% MODERATE VACANCY, 26.2% LOW VACANCY, 13.8% GREATER DOWNTOWN, 12.8% NON-DETROIT, 0.6% INDUSTRIAL

GEOGRAPHY



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP: SHAPED ENGAGEMENT. From the start of the Detroit Works Project, leaders recognized that the work could not be incubated, owned, or shepherded by a select few. As initial engagement activities began in mid-2010, a 55-member Mayor’s Advisory Task Force (MATF) was established to help guide the development of the process. Then, as a broader set of engagement, technical, and communications practitioners were brought on board in mid-2011, additional community advisors were recruited to complement the Mayor’s Advisory Task Force and broaden the kinds of voices that represented the process. First, a Steering Committee was appointed by the Mayor, with recommendations from philanthropic leaders. This Steering Committee guided the overall effort and was represented by leaders in government, nonprofit, institutional, faith-based, community, and business sectors. The Mayor’s Advisory Task Force continued to meet regularly to stay up to date on progress and offer suggestions and recommendations.

In addition, a group of Process Leaders was selected for their expertise in civic engagement among different constituencies and geographic areas in Detroit. They advised the civic engagement process toward blending community and technical expertise. The Process Leaders helped establish a framework for this blended approach and initiated working groups with partners to guide and implement particular engagement activities.

The three groups—Steering Committee, Process Leaders, and the Mayor’s Advisory Task Force—represented different and complementary skills, networks, and expertise. They were instrumental in achieving the engagement goals of the Detroit Works Project, and they themselves greatly enriched the development of the Strategic Framework. Finally, trained Ambassadors and Street Team members were also enlisted to facilitate engagement amongst additional communities in Detroit. Altogether, more than one hundred leaders from different aspects of community helped ensure that the process was a far-reaching, authentic, and informed effort. (A full list of the people who helped shape and lead the engagement can be found in the Civic Engagement Appendix and in the Acknowledgements section.)

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE: VALUED AND INTEGRATED. From early on, community stakeholders wanted to ensure that their thoughts, priorities, and knowledge would be valued and used in the planning process. In no uncertain terms, the Detroit community wanted an authentic and accountable process. As one person commented, “As a citizen, I’m concerned with, well, what is the plan? You’re going to take this information and is it going to make a difference? No one wants to think that they’re wasting their time.” Community knowledge was viewed as more than anecdotal and secondary. The community members were acknowledged throughout the process as the experts on their own neighborhoods, communities, and fields.

To integrate community expertise, an ongoing working process was established between technical and civic engagement practitioners with various community sectors. Insights, stories, data, and ideas from broad cross-sections of community were shared with the Planning Team, who worked to lay the physical and procedural groundwork that would enact these ideas into a Strategic Framework for support and change. In turn, technical analysis and ideas were blended into this base of community knowledge, which together helped to distill priorities, implications, and recommendations for the future. Although this process was logistically and intellectually challenging (and at times messy) it confirmed how valuable a transparent and accountable mutual exchange of community knowledge and technical knowledge can be, and how far it can go towards achieving credibility, accountability and trust. One stakeholder stated: “...Their ideas were solicited, recorded, and shared, and I think that was good.” The end product, the planning elements of the Detroit Strategic Framework, represents integrated viewpoints and expertise from a wide variety of community stakeholders. The process and the product both reflect the strong value placed on community knowledge as an explicit source for recommendations, and it helped to establish a consensus for desired actions.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TACTICS



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 1



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2



DETROIT 24/7 ROAMING IPAD STATION



HOMEBASE



OPEN HOUSES



ROAD SHOW EVENT



ROAMING TABLE



WORKING SESSIONS



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT: MULTIPLE CHANNELS FOR OUTREACH AND EXCHANGE. Transparency was a chief concern voiced by residents. We wanted to avoid the “No one talked with me” problem, and community stakeholders wanted to be kept abreast of how the elements of the Strategic Framework were progressing along the way. To complement the knowledge-blending process, the Strategic Framework teams shared information and conducted frequent public updates throughout the process. Direct and simultaneous communication occurred through the Detroit Works HomeBase phone line, web site, the Detroit Stories web site, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, a regular e-newsletter, periodic distribution of flyers, posters, postcards, and other print material. Phone message “blasts” delivered key project updates to thousands of homes. In addition, the HomeBase offices allowed for formal and informal face-to-face communication about the project, and the walls of HomeBase featured exhibits showing how the Strategic Framework began to take shape. Print, radio, and television media partners helped to extend the project’s reach still further.

All of these communications strategies, while not distinct from the information exchange process, helped engage a broad cross-section of people and communities in the important and timely questions of the Strategic Framework process. The combination of virtual and digital engagement served as effective ways to engage with a wide range of people.

In addition to the town hall forums, HomeBase, and the use of social media, additional engagement tactics included, but were not limited to:

- team members’ attendance and presentations at existing community meetings and events;
- the Roaming Table, a portable “information booth,” staffed and set up in a housing complex, a busy commuter junction, and other locations ideal for engaging in brief one-on-one conversations about Detroit’s future;
- an online gaming platform called Detroit 24/7, in which players could earn points for contributing perspectives and ideas related to planning and Detroit’s future;
- telephone town hall events, during which high numbers of callers could listen to Detroit community leaders, ask questions, and hear about upcoming events;

- roundtable work sessions, through which sector colleagues convened with technical experts to contribute expertise on relevant parts of the Strategic Framework; and
- two series of district-based Community Conversations, face-to-face interactive events during which people in an area of the city could engage in dialogue with DWP team members and with each other on priorities, hopes, goals related to quality of life, quality of business, and other important aspects of the Strategic Framework.

Although it was challenging to remain transparent and wide-ranging even as the effort was rapid-paced and constantly evolving, the attention to communications linked with engagement proved largely effective for sharing, gathering, and blending information and knowledge. (See the Civic Engagement Appendix for more detail of how this occurred.)

DWPLTP has garnered 136 stories that appeared on the television and radio programs or in the print and online publications of 40 different local and national news organizations, 119,312,772 unpaid print and online media impressions, and nearly five hours of unpaid television and radio coverage.



TOWARD A SHARED VISION

ACTIONS FOR ADVANCING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Simply put, people fuel change. Because of the breadth and depth of community engaged in the original Detroit Works Project, people are now even more prepared and excited to be part of actions to make the Strategic Framework a reality. Out of these initial conversations, a pretty stunning, ambitious, and exuberant vision for Detroit has arisen. Now, to implement the ideas and strategies, the Detroit region needs an engaged constituency of individuals and institutions. We must develop a cadre of capable, organized, and equipped leaders at all levels of community. Informed and motivated community—broadly defined—can transform how an effort unfolds or succeeds.

At the individual level, this translates to cultivating interest and passion, fostering leadership skills and experience, and valuing and paving the way for relationships to flourish. At the broad systems level, it means creating strong cross-issue and cross-disciplinary connections.

Five specific actions are recommended to implement the Strategic Framework, which will sustain and support the vision of a greater future for the city. Each of these five implementation recommendations follow closely from what we have learned throughout the development of the Strategic Framework, and they align under the three broader engagement principles described in the last section.

**ESTABLISH A DETROIT STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK CONSORTIUM**

**ENLIST ADDITIONAL CHAMPIONS FOR
IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY REFORM**

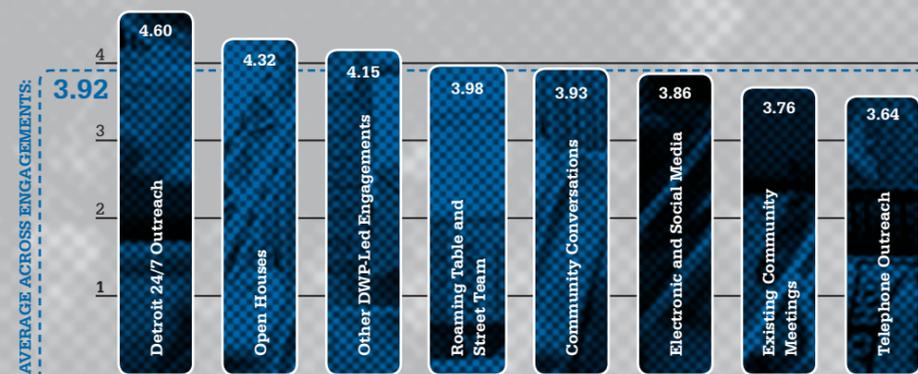
INFORM, EDUCATE, AND EQUIP KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**STRENGTHEN AND COMPLEMENT
THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

**REPORT BACK FOR TRANSPARENT AND
ONGOING PROGRESS**

PROMPT: What is your general feeling toward Detroit Works Project Long Term Planning?

NEGATIVE=1 | SKEPTICAL=2
NEUTRAL=3 | SOMEWHAT HOPEFUL=4
HOPEFUL=5



When asked to rate their current feelings towards DWPLTP, participants gave an average answer of 3.92, closest to “Somewhat Hopeful”. The bar chart to the right shows the average response to this question for the different engagement techniques employed during DWPLTP.

ESTABLISH A DETROIT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK CONSORTIUM

The Steering Committee, along with several of the projects other community advisors, are developing an idea for an entity that would be charged with stewarding the implementation and the civic engagement of the Strategic Framework into the future. This recommendation reflects the desire to develop sustained engagement capacity by strengthening the engagement “legs of the stool” as already referenced. This consortium, along with its potential partners, members, or advisors, would be a significant stride toward establishing a permanent civic stewardship structure for the City of Detroit that transcends many boundaries: geographic, economic, ethnic, issues, scales (neighborhood, city, regional), and sectors (public and private, nonprofit and government, resident and formal).

The Consortium would be composed of a group of civic-minded leaders who would connect plans to resources and would support, integrate, advance, and monitor efforts to enact and update the Strategic Framework recommendations and strategies, as well as to anticipate new challenges for the city in the coming decades. The Consortium would build from the release of the Strategic Framework to ensure that it remains a relevant “living” resource that informs and/or guides multiple efforts to improve quality of life and quality of business in Detroit, and help them become aligned and sustained over time. The Consortium would also help align or coordinate initiatives across all of the Framework’s planning elements. The Consortium could be established in a manner that permits it to evolve into a permanent stewardship structure for the city.

ENLIST ADDITIONAL CHAMPIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY REFORM

A single group cannot shoulder the responsibility for advancing Detroit’s prosperity. In addition to the core Consortium membership, it will be critical to cultivate and align additional champions—both at individual and institutional levels—to become active and passionate advocates for the Strategic Framework. Particularly when they are respected and trusted leaders in their communities or sectors, champions can be a powerful voice to help efforts gain credibility and traction. Such champions will help ensure that the Strategic Framework stays on the public’s, policymakers’, and decision makers’ radar screens. They can also be tapped as influencers to help reduce or remove barriers to the effort’s success, can serve as implementers to drive and participate in particular initiatives that align with the Strategic Framework, or carry out comprehensive policy reform relevant to the Framework’s aims.

INFORM, EDUCATE, AND EQUIP KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The vision of the Strategic Framework cannot be a static statement. Concerted efforts must continue to really “take the plan to the city” and engage individuals and institutions on what it is about, who shaped it, why it is so critical, and most importantly, how to use it and align it with existing plans. Every sector in Detroit demands this kind of knowledge and dialogue in order to move forward. However, it is important to note that, as always, engagement requires engagers. Professional organizers or engagement specialists often serve as centers of gravity to connect people to action. They can coordinate and drive the effort to introduce the Strategic Framework and build momentum and consensus within and among pockets throughout the city.

District HomeBases can help establish a place and a connection at the neighborhood level. As an interviewed stakeholder stated, “We can continue to use the tools that Detroit Works incorporated, and on a smaller scale in our neighborhood, continue the same process.” District HomeBases would provide a physical place where people could come and discuss what can specifically happen in their neighborhood related to the implementation of Detroit Works Project Long Term Planning. The act of having a physical space where people can come to where information can be available and transparent is important to allowing community to be a part of the implementation process.

STRENGTHEN AND COMPLEMENT THE PUBLIC SECTOR

We must pursue a collaborative regional agenda that recognizes Detroit’s strengths and our region’s shared destiny. Government cannot provide all of the answers to Detroit’s issues, nor can it implement all of them alone. National examples such as New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Philadelphia illustrate that work like this is a multi-faceted community endeavor of talking and working together to answer complex questions and collaboratively implement the answers. These examples point to civic engagement as a system that underlies Detroit’s operations. Cities are a complex overlap of many systems that address needs such as for transportation and energy, but also must address the need for a system of engagement.

This requires that we broaden ownership. Detroit—a city of national and global importance—will need to engage with a sustainable and sustaining web of stakeholders that suit its position in the region and the nation (not only “by Detroit for Detroit,” but a collaboration among all levels of government and geography).

Detroit’s civic infrastructure must relate through all scales of action: Neighborhood actions collaborating with citywide actions; neighborhood organizing partnering with citywide organizing; citywide efforts relating to the regional context; and all efforts related to and helping shape statewide objectives for economic growth, quality of life, and other important measures of successful communities. Engaging multiple sectors and multiple scales builds the capacity to implement citywide policies through multi-format engagement.

Initially, implementing the Detroit Strategic Framework requires drilling down the citywide strategies to the district and neighborhood levels, enabling residents to use the citywide Strategic Framework as a basis for neighborhood decision making to improve quality of life. As communications and resources become more robust, these localized efforts can in turn help in revisiting and updating citywide objectives and strategies.

REPORT BACK FOR TRANSPARENT AND ONGOING PROGRESS

QUESTIONS, IDEAS, ANSWERS, SOLUTIONS, REPEAT: The cycle of sharing and developing information together is a fundamental engine of civic engagement and community progress. The information-sharing and civic insights that supported the development of the Strategic Framework must continue to support it through its adoption and implementation. The Strategic Framework is not a static, traditional “plan,” but rather a living and growing structure for change, and a guide to decision making. Continuing the civic conversation and revisiting the Strategic Framework’s ideas and assumptions will be critical to maintaining the integrity and quality of its vision. This will mean continuous, transparent information traveling in both directions between the implementers and the civic community of Detroit. This exchange will track what kinds of implementation initiatives are happening; how the Consortium is progressing; the setbacks, challenges, and opportunities that are emerging; how money is being spent; what in the landscape is shifting; what milestones are being achieved; and frequent updates to share what kinds of change people can see and feel in the air (through stories and evaluation). The types of communications should remain as broad and multi-platformed as it was during the initial development of the civic engagement effort and the Strategic Framework. People from all parts of Detroit and all sectors that support Detroit should be asked for their energy, feedback, input, and resources as actions unfold and take root.

Because the realities are daunting, and the challenges will not go away tomorrow, they require that we fearlessly continue to engage in deep consideration and difficult—though sometimes inspirational and uplifting—conversations about what to do and what to make in Detroit. We cannot rest at a pat solution that would suit a different city. There won’t be an easy “Getting to Yes” for Detroit this time tomorrow. How could there be, for a city as complex, as resilient, and as rich in both opportunities and challenges, as Detroit is today? Instead, we must proceed with open eyes and be willing to flex muscles and minds—not simply to “Get to Yes,” but to “Get to Next.”

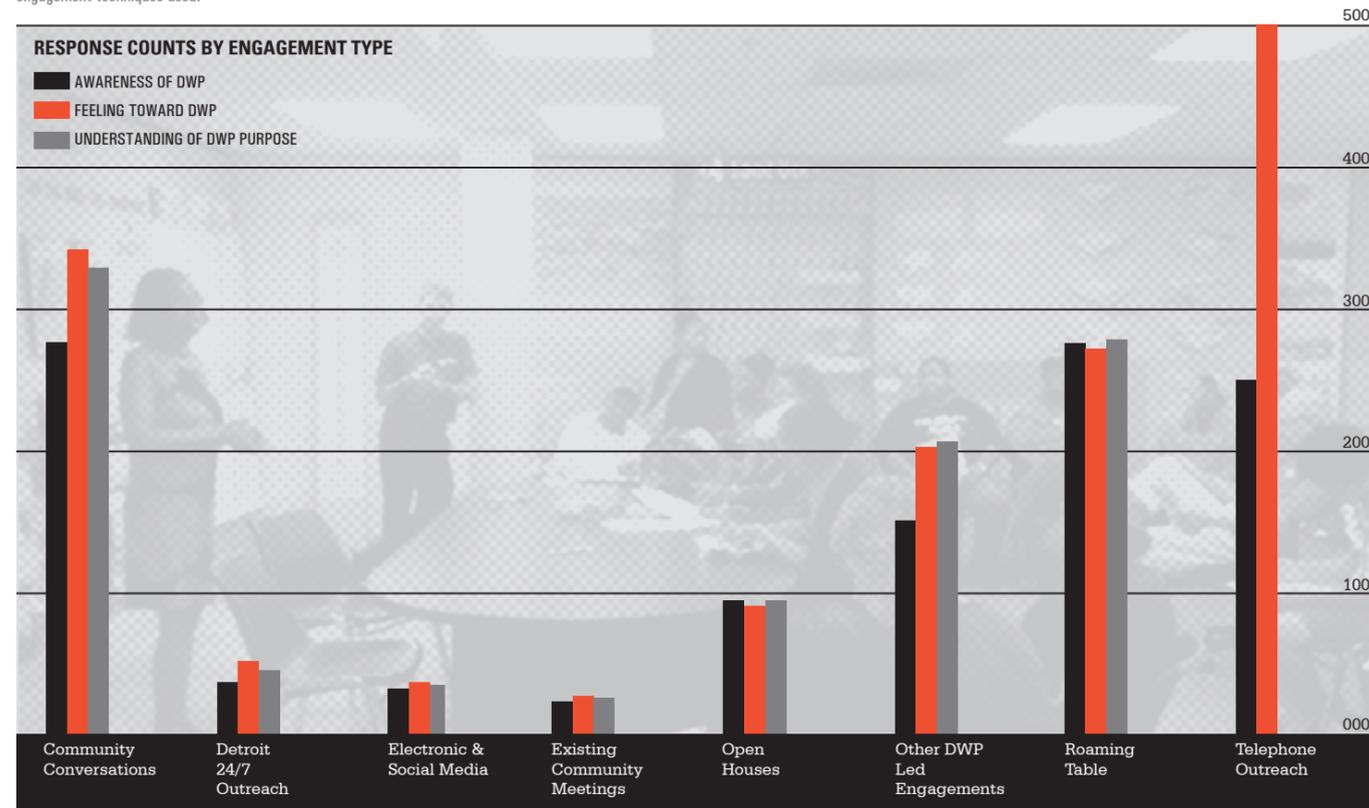
This word cloud summarizes themes from participant feedback about the planning process. The size of the word corresponds to the frequency a participant's comment addressed that word or phrase - the larger the word or phrase, the more frequently it was mentioned.



THREE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

BUILDING AN IMPROVED AND SUSTAINABLE CIVIC CULTURE

Most face-to-face DWP Long Term Planning (LTP) Civic Engagement activities included the opportunity to evaluate the DWLTP process. The bar chart below shows responses to the "Awareness", "Feeling", and "Understanding" evaluation questions during each of the different engagement techniques used.

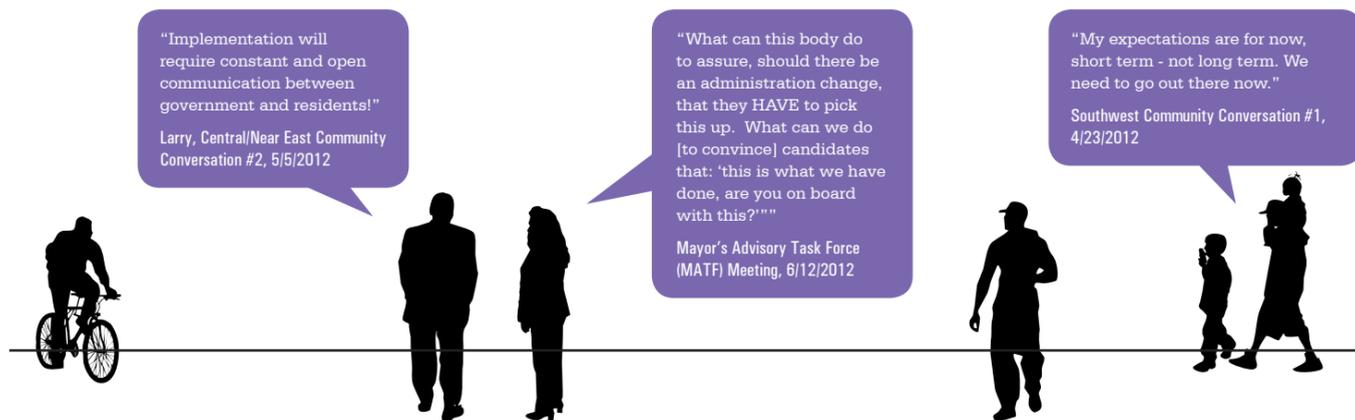


1. EXPAND CAPACITY FOR THE LONG TERM: BUILDING ON STRENGTHS TO EXTEND RANGE. To carry the idea of a "civic infrastructure" forward, a good infrastructure is coordinated, resilient, and adaptive to changing conditions. It is designed to move—be it electricity or information—from without and within, to conduct flows across boundaries and throughout the system. It also must be designed for the long term and to have "overflow capacity" that permits it to withstand urgent needs without breaking down. At the same time, it must function efficiently and primarily for daily needs, not just critical "hot spots." The remainder of this section begins to address the existing assets of Detroit's civic infrastructure, identify capacity needs, and draw on the possibilities revealed by the Strategic Framework Civic Engagement process for building and renewing that civic capacity.

Civic engagement capacity (or infrastructure) should have four components, like legs of a stool: (1) city government; (2) philanthropy; (3) Detroit institutions (including the nonprofit and business sectors; and (4) Detroit residents. Each of the four needs to be activated and involved at different times and for various issues, but there also should be strong connections and relationships across them. Within each of these four components, there is already a wide range of interest, experience and capacity around civic engagement in Detroit. Strengthening engagement capacity for each of these components has no "one size fits all", but there are general areas of engagement capacity for potential development and investment. These include:

1) City Government: Oftentimes, government agencies have an obligation or responsibility to inform, involve, and solicit input from constituents on various matters. Generally, these kinds of public involvement processes are already done well. To take engagement capacity to the next level, government may benefit from better understanding how civic engagement can help them better connect with and build constituents, beyond simply informing and asking for feedback. The government sector may also benefit from engagement training and technical assistance, especially on new and emerging engagement tools and practices. (such as those highlighted on page XX, called "A Mosaic of Tactics for a Mosaic of People"). In addition, government agencies may find it effective to initiate a public sector table in order to meet regularly and build relationships in service of increasing alignment and collaboration between agencies and/or between levels of government (city, state, and national). Financial resources and partnership resources from Detroit institutions and philanthropy, along with informed and engaged residents, would help city government develop these engagement capacities.

2) Philanthropy: Foundations that invest in Detroit also have a strong base of interest, experience, and investments in engagement that they can build upon. The philanthropic sector, like government, could also benefit from having its own tables to share engagement learning and initiate joint investments with colleagues. Indeed, some of this work is already happening. In addition, developing open communication and direct relationships with nonprofits helps strengthen their engagement roles and relationships in community. Finally, foundations can continue to bridge, connect, and convene organizations and other partners around emerging tools and issues related to engagement.



3) Detroit institutions: This component includes both the nonprofit sector and the private sector because the engagement capacities are very similar. Beyond the collaborative mechanisms and vehicles already referenced (such as tables, networks, and coalitions), Detroit institutions may benefit from leveraging new or deeper partnerships across other sectors. Organizations and institutions that are less familiar with civic engagement could become more effective through training, technical assistance, and partnering with organizations that are more adept at engagement. In addition, the work Detroit nonprofits in particular may be enhanced by building the skills and capacity of staff to plan and execute engagement tactics effectively.

4) Detroit residents: Increasing engagement capacity for Detroit residents has two prongs. First, there must be an acknowledgement, valuing, and support of where people already engage and gather, such as barber shops and block parties, churches and sports games. Resident-led efforts, meetings, and events should be celebrated and resourced. The second prong, then, is to encourage and equip residents to become involved with institutional engagement efforts. We must provide residents with meaningful ways to make change in their community and the city at large. People do not just decide to engage; they must have a connection with the issue at hand or with a person who is already involved. Residents will invite their neighbors and friends because social connectedness leads to a connection with organizations. However, supporting individual residents to become involved requires dedicated investment. It requires leadership development, embracing resident involvement and sense of identity and place as a celebrated and critical ingredient to Detroit’s future prosperity, and helping create entry points for people to connect with institutions and become involved through citizen advisory groups, listening sessions, issue summits, and a host of other opportunities.

Perhaps the most critical facet of civic engagement capacity is the connections, communications, and collaboration among sectors and networks. Supporting these connections requires dedicated investments. Detroiters have called on civic actors to move from unilateral actions (“silos”) to multifaceted networks, forums, tables, and collaborations based in shared issues and common self-interests. Many effective collaborations are opportunistic in nature: They simply identify what the various stakeholders have in common. What are the shared interests? What are the shared motivations for taking action? What can we achieve together, even if all of our priorities and theories of change do not align? Collaboration happens on a spectrum from deciding to mutually work on or contribute to a specific, time-sensitive project to having an ongoing, consensus-driven alliance. Longer term relationships and efforts often travel along this spectrum from initial shared interests or relatively short-term outcomes to ongoing and expanded dialogue for systemic change.



2. INFORMED, INCLUSIVE DECISIONS: DEVELOPING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION. Since transparency, accountability, and trust are critical to any civic engagement endeavor, the way that information is collected, analyzed, and shared matters a great deal. **But it is not only about input and exchange—it is also about valuing and demonstrating that value when initiating a process.** We learned through the Detroit Works Project that authentic and routine information gathering, sharing, and processing yield an authentic and credible process with more widespread interest and support. In other words, when people feel informed and can see their “fingerprints” (their voice and perspective) in a plan or initiative, they are more apt to believe in it, actively support it, and tell others about it. They feel like they were asked, they were heard, and that what they said matters.

Specific engagement strategies that relate to knowledge and information include:

1) Support the development of robust and reliable data. Good data helps you pinpoint problems, see their root causes, and identify the costs and viability of potential solutions. We must support and build upon the work of Detroit organizations and institutions to gather, synthesize, and analyze high quality and illustrative information that helps aid informed decision making.

2) Facilitate open and transparent access to information. Information should be shared and “open-sourced” as much as possible with all concerned stakeholders of an effort through an established engagement feedback loop. Visual formats, engagement through the arts, games and simulations, experiential learning, and other ways to translate complex ideas into palatable, fun, energetic, and interactive formats is a core part of this strategy.

The impacts of increasing access are extending reach and building credibility. Open access enables the grassroots to move from “push” to power: instead of having always to act on the defensive, residents and smaller civic nonprofits would have access to information and be able to reflect back with the evidence of their own experiences in ways that can frame and shape official actions over the long and short term. Beyond the individual, better sharing of information helps at institutional levels. It helps government and businesses stay in better communication and coordination within each sector or with each other, and enables them to build trust, make better decisions, and collaborate better.

3) Integrate engagement with communications efforts. Those who are expert at communications strategies take the lead on crafting messages, while those who are engagement practitioners or trusted messengers in various communities or sectors can engage people on those messages. Together, they can determine multiple avenues for disseminating and sharing information, including traditional media such as print and radio, phones and SMS text, Internet and social media, and community-level such as sharing through faith institutions or community radio stations—places where people already get their information.

4) Incubate and support efforts for blending community expertise with technical expertise. Creating engagement opportunities that provide mutual exchange of knowledge and learning is key. This principle is true for many kinds of civic engagement endeavors, be they issue advocacy, election cycles, creative place making, planning or others. For a planning effort in particular, we must find ways that neighborhood-level plans and concerns can feed up to the citywide level and vice versa, and how community input and feedback will be used. We can build on the efforts of Detroit nonprofit organizations to synthesize community expertise into integrated data sets in both formal and informal ways.

Better information and data sharing not only can build transparency and trust, because people can see themselves reflected in a process. They can also lead to more informed decision making. This strategy, as with the others, requires dedicated support. In this case, it takes the form of both technical and human resources to facilitate information development, information sharing, and information blending.

*Most face-to-face DWP Long Term Planning Civic Engagement activities included the opportunity to evaluate the DWPLTP process. Between November 2011 and September 2012, 1,725 participants responded to questions concerning their awareness of, feeling towards, and understanding of DWPLTP as well as if their feeling towards the process changed as a result of the engagement. The bar charts above show responses to the “Awareness,” “Feeling,” and “Understanding” evaluation questions during each month of DWPLTP Civic Engagement through September 2012, as well as the number of responses received during the different engagement techniques used.



3. A MOSAIC OF TACTICS FOR A MOSAIC OF PEOPLE: DIVERSE PLATFORM OF OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE. Traditional engagement methods often ask for people to give their comments, reaction, or input to a proposal or plan. But more recently, much has been written and discussed about the rapid changes in our society in terms of how, when, and why communities choose to engage. The next frontier of civic engagement is responding to changing social realities, especially in the way people engage face to face and online, which shape and complement people's expectations that they will have access to the process and to decision makers, that their time and opinions will be valued, that they may have fun through engagement, and that they can rely on trusted messengers and neighbor-to-neighbor recruitment and involvement, as well as organizations, institutions, and sectors in engagement efforts.

Events and meetings are a time-tested way for community to gather, share concerns, gain knowledge, and build relationships. However, civic engagement is not limited to an event. Meetings and forums are not the only mechanism for developing relationships, seeking input and expertise, making decisions, and creating joint plans for action. Civic engagement efforts tend to reach much greater depth and/or breadth of reach—and thus a greater potential for success—if a range of engagement methods and tactics are designed in order to attract different audiences and networks. This includes both inviting community in—through meetings, work sessions, events and other gatherings—as well as going to where communities already gather. Many new, creative, and innovative ways to engage people and institutions are being piloted and shared across the country. Annual working summits to gather cross-sector leaders on an issue or concern;

Examples of such models, many of which were part of the Detroit Strategic Framework engagement process, include:

- Experiential learning, bike tours, or bus tours;
- Tabling and one-on-ones;
- Virtual town hall events;
- Canvassing and door knocking;
- Trained speakers' bureaus or ambassador programs;
- Storytelling, community listening sessions, and oral histories;
- Presenting or participating in existing meetings of a professional association, a place of worship, or other scheduled gathering;
- Joint neighborhood councils, school councils, and other citizen spaces that have been made more participatory and inclusive;
- Proven processes for recruitment, issue framing, and facilitation of small-group discussions and large-group forums;
- New cross-sector models that approach an issue from the lens of collective impact (e.g. "cradle to career"), such as a broad-based consortium, task force, funders' collaborative, or a strategic commercial/business network;
- Online tools for network-building, idea generation, crowd-sourcing or crowd-funding, dissemination of public data, and serious games;
- Youth leadership efforts;
- Using the arts for dialogue, consensus building, or creative place making;
- Buildings that can be physical hubs for engagement;
- Participatory budgeting and other approaches to making public meetings more efficient, inclusive, and collaborative;
- Action research and other methods that involve citizens in data-gathering, evaluation, and accountability; and
- Food, music, and other social and cultural elements that make engagement more enjoyable and fun.

Successful civic engagement ultimately goes beyond a laundry list of tactics; it embraces a strategic and targeted plan in which a combination of tactics are woven together. A complete set of engagement tactics complement each other, because each is tailored to a specific group, such as an age group, an ethnic or cultural community, a specific neighborhood, a professional field (such as small business entrepreneurs or community developers), and so forth. Engagement can accomplish different goals at different times. Sometimes, as in much of the Detroit Works civic engagement, it's about listening and getting input and feedback to shape something. Other times, as in the next phase for Detroit as it builds a permanent, sustainable civic capacity to sustain and grow beyond the Strategic Framework time frame, it's about engaging people and groups to actually implement something together—to take action. It's both a process and an outcome.

"Maintaining a real degree of integrity and meaningfulness in what you communicate to the public...I think it's one area that we need to continue to improve on."
 DWPLTP Civic Engagement Audit 2012



"We can continue to use the tools that Detroit Works incorporated, and on a smaller scale in our neighborhood, continue the same process."
 DWPLTP Civic Engagement Audit 2012

Image Sources: 1,2) Marvin Shaouni; 3-7) DWPLTP Civic Engagement Team—Flickr; 8) Marvin Shaouni; 9) DWPLTP Civic Engagement Team—Flickr; 10) Marvin Shaouni



CONCLUSION

DEDICATING OURSELVES TO OUR FUTURE

Throughout this Strategic Framework, we've talked in different ways about building a strong infrastructure and paving the way for prosperity. In an important sense, we have also been talking about love. For when all else is said and done, often it is love—love of a place, love of a neighborhood, love of a team or a landscape or family or just a moment in time that is bound up in the experience of Detroit—that can prompt this city of 700,000 to stand its ground and face its bitter truths, willing to work and hope for the days of change.

To be sure, not everyone in Detroit is yet standing on their own two feet. To be sure, many—individuals and institutions alike—will need a great deal of support in order to not only survive but flourish again. Such support will need to be focused and very strategic, stretching limited resources and time to fit all the urgent, sometimes competing needs of this great but still-hurting city.

For civic engagement, that means helping people see their stake in change, reminding them what they love in Detroit and in each other and themselves. Detroit can leverage the strengths of its rich civic history to create numerous ways for people to come together, support each other, face the hard work ahead and celebrate the possibilities for the city's future. What Detroit needs now are strong leaders who love what it stands for and what it can become, residents who have a voice in their neighborhoods and can imagine the possibilities for the entire city, and the best possible knowledge that comes from hard facts and deeply felt personal experiences—and yes, from an enduring love and understanding of Detroit. Such engagement can only be possible if it is supported by active institutions whose aim is to nourish a vibrant, multi-tiered civic culture to propel Detroit towards a prosperous future. At its core, this renewed way to talk and work together is an act of faith, an act of extraordinary yet grounded and realistic optimism. In short: A commitment to the city of Detroit.