Detroit
Cleaning up the Osborn neighborhood was one of the projects supported by Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit.
The Landscape for Revitalization is Stronger than Ever
A Message from Managing Director Laura Trudeau

At the end of 2015, Detroit was fiscally stronger than it had been in many years. The previous December, the city emerged from a bankruptcy that could have mired it in legal-fiscal limbo. There was an immediate moment of optimism, followed by the unavoidable question of whether it could last.

Many months later, the answer is a qualified “yes.”

There is a palpable sense now that further progress is at hand. We can cite the leadership of Mayor Mike Duggan and partners in Washington and Lansing. We can cite Detroit residents, old and new, working in their neighborhoods. Across that spectrum, Detroiters are forging a culture of confidence — a belief that this place can offer an opportunity-rich future for everyone.

Kresge works to advance this vision by working in multiple areas. Looking back at 2015, a signal neighborhood initiative and our transit work seem to capture the breadth of our ambition and hopes.

We are sowing the seeds of revival far and wide through Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit, a three-year, $5 million initiative within our “green, healthy, active neighborhoods” focus area. In April, we announced a package of 18 grants for both “shovel-ready” projects that could be implemented within 18 months, and for planning grants for promising ideas.

By November, we saw the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program in a new home, new pocket exercise parks in the Piety Hill neighborhood, other projects emerging and plans being drawn. When we opened applications for the second round, it was to more than 80 new proposals. We look to increasingly light up the map of Detroit with the reality of positive change through this initiative.

Meanwhile, on 3.3 miles of Woodward Avenue, Kresge’s $50 million investment in the M-1 RAIL streetcar line is taking shape. We can already see economic development along the route where the first passengers will ride in early 2017. M-1 RAIL’s role as the catalyzing first leg of a regional system is solid, with the promise of major benefits for residents of Detroit’s 139 square miles — and beyond to the metropolitan region that includes Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties.

To that end, our 21st century regional transit focus in 2015 included grants for crucial public education about the need for — and promise of — high-quality regional transportation through the Detroit Regional Chamber Foundation and the grassroots organization, Transit Riders United.

We are encouraged and optimistic that the landscape for revitalization is stronger than ever through projects modest and massive, concentrated and dispersed — and all mutually reinforcing for a better future.
The Live6 Alliance is a new community development organization in northwest Detroit. Left, participants at the Live6 launch event shared their hopes for the neighborhood revitalization project.

Seeing is Believing
Livernois and Six Mile: On the Brink of Change

The northwest Detroit, Mich., neighborhood near the intersection of Livernois Avenue and Six Mile Road was a vibrant place during Lauren Hood’s youth.

But Hood says the transformation that occurred there since has been heartbreaking.

“When I was growing up, there were no vacant homes on our street,” Hood says. “Everybody knew each other. It is really sad to see on my street in particular houses slated for demolition. I didn’t grow up with that.”

Commercial strips have fared even worse than residential streets. Where Hood can still recall rows of businesses whose owners she knew by name, there are now stretches of vacant and under-maintained storefronts — especially along the mile-long section of Six Mile Road between Marygrove College and the University of Detroit Mercy (UDM).

Jevona Watson, who has lived in the neighborhood since 2005, says there’s nothing to draw locals to this stretch — even less for students attending the two colleges.

“I just grew up with it, always. Why would they ever leave their gated community?” Watson asks. “There’s nothing enticing them. I’m from here and I’ve lived here my entire life, but as an outsider — meaning a visitor, someone from out of state — I wouldn’t venture outside on my own.”

Reviving a Neighborhood

In 2015, The Kresge Foundation joined other funders in an effort to start bringing the neighborhood back. The Live6 Alliance is a new community development organization aimed at revitalizing Six Mile between the two colleges, as well as the stretch of Livernois running roughly from Six Mile to the shopping district a mile north at Seven Mile Road.

Laura Trudeau, managing director of The Kresge Foundation’s Detroit program, says the Live6 concept arose from research the foundation funded that examined ways for UDM and Marygrove to better engage with their neighborhoods. One key conclusion was that the schools and the community could work together to strengthen the Six Mile-Livernois area as a whole, and better connect the colleges and the shopping district.

“We just saw this confluence of assets in the neighborhood that we could be helpful in supporting,” Trudeau says.

Kresge committed $400,000 over two years to support Live6, augmented by commitments of $100,000 from UDM and $50,000 from Living Cities. (Kresge also supports technical experts U3 Advisors to assist revitalization in both Midtown and the Live6 area.) Shortly after Live6 was announced in the summer of 2015, Hood was hired to serve as acting director.

“I think the most important thing is it sends a beacon out to the rest of the philanthropic community that says, OK, this place is worth investing in,” Hood says. “It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If one organization says, ‘This is worth investing in,’ then other organizations start to invest.

“Somebody’s got to be the first, though.”

In the months since Hood has been at work, she has solicited a variety of opinions from neighbors and community leaders regarding a future vision for the area.

“People in general are just excited to see something happening,” Hood explains. “These are really organized communities, so they’ve been contacted over the years many, many times (by people saying) things are about to change.”

But little did. Today, residents can see action, including potential investors and tenants out and about, scouting locations and exploring the possibilities.

“Detriot is a city that is only as good as its neighborhoods — all of its neighborhoods.”

—Benjamin Kennedy
The Kresge Foundation
"We really want to be holistic," Trudeau says. "We try to
People are like, 'OK. Something's about to change.'
I think people really believe it now," Hood says.
The Livernois-Six Mile area was a clear fit for the focus
The Live6 Alliance is one of many projects that are
Midtown as Model
Wayne State University’s work with Detroit preschools.
for passenger service in early 2017. Right, Kresge has supported
opportunity and quality of life:
» Fostering green, healthy and active neighborhoods
» Enhancing the corridor along Woodward Avenue.
» Advancing 21st-century regional transit
» Improving early childhood education
» Supporting the city’s arts and culture ecosystem
» Enhancing civic capacity
“We really want to be holistic,” Trudeau says. “We try to
work across those priorities. If there’s an investment
that we can make that achieves multiple objectives,
we’ll do it in a heartbeat.”
The Livernois-Six Mile area was a clear fit for the focus
area aimed at strengthening neighborhoods, but
Detroit Program Deputy Director Wendy Jackson says
the Live6 project “cuts across several strategies.” For
instance, engaging citizens and neighborhood groups
in the process of renewal enhances civic capacity for
a variety of future projects. And, Jackson notes, the
area is a good fit for evolving efforts to support early
childhood education and arts and culture.
In shaping Live6, Kresge took inspiration from
Midtown Detroit, an area where the foundation
had already invested considerable resources
with remarkable success. Kresge has supported
numerous initiatives in Midtown, notably forming a
strong partnership with community development
corporation Midtown Detroit Inc., one of the key
players in the booming district. The Midtown
neighborhood is situated around Woodward Avenue
just two miles north of the central business district,
where Kresge has also funded major projects like the
RiverWalk that runs along the Detroit River.
Trudeau says Midtown’s revitalization was
empowered by other longtime resident institutions
like Wayne State University, the College for Creative
Studies and the Detroit Medical Center. The
foundation saw parallels to those institutions and
UDM and Marygrove.
“They’re smaller anchors in a smaller district, but they
still have an important role to play,” Trudeau says. “In
some ways, their success is tied to the success of the
surrounding area.”

‘Planting the Flag’
Benjamin Kennedy describes the Livernois-Six Mile
area as having “Woodward-like qualities” because of
the surrounding institutions and the importance of
the two corridors in the neighborhood. As managing
director of Kresge’s American Cities Practice,
Kennedy also supports the foundation’s Detroit
Program.
“We are extremely proud of the work we’ve collectively
done in Midtown and downtown, but we know we aren’t
finished,” Kennedy says. “It is important to reassert the
core of the city, but a city is only as good as its
neighborhoods—all of its neighborhoods.
“We knew we had to take some of the experiences we
had in the Woodward corridor, some of the things
we’d learned, and certainly some of the things that
have worked, and see if we could translate them to
some of our neighborhoods.”
Kennedy says Kresge applied two key takeaways from
Midtown in its approach to Livernois and Six Mile. The
first was what Kennedy describes as “planting a flag,”
or creating a “very visible project that suggests to folks
that investment is forthcoming and work is being done.”

In Midtown, that project was the long-planned
3.3-mile M-1 RAIL streetcar system now under
construction and slated to begin passenger service in
early 2017 with Kresge’s pivotal support.
At Livernois and Six Mile, it was the Livernois
Streetscape Enhancement Project, which began in
2014 with beautification of the Livernois median.
Kresge contributed $200,000 to that program as a
co-funder with UDM, the Michigan Department of
Transportation, the City of Detroit and the Detroit
Economic Growth Corp.

The second main strategy was to invest in what Kennedy
calls a “district stewards,” a person or organization
based in and invested in the future of the district. In
Midtown, that steward was Midtown Detroit Inc. led by
Sue Mosey; at Livernois and Six Mile, it’s Live6 and Hood.

“If you want to transform a place, you need someone
who wakes up and goes to bed worrying about
tangible changes in that geography,” Kennedy says.
“You need someone who really is looking out for the
collective interests of the folks in that neighborhood.”

Enthusiasm is Contagious
Although Midtown has been a major inspiration for
Live6’s launch, its district steward will tell you that the
two are still very different projects. Asked if Live6’s
intention is to make the Livernois-Six Mile area the
next Midtown, Hood’s answer is an emphatic “no.”
Although she’s currently a Midtown resident
and proponent, Hood is set on working with the
residents of the Livernois-Six Mile area to drive their
neighborhood’s revitalization.

“The businesses should be carefully curated and
cultivated by what residents have said they want,”
Hood says. “The people that live (in the Liveli area)
have been up here 20, 30, 40, 50 years, so their
community has different needs from Midtown;
Midtown’s a little more transient.”

According to UDM President Antoine Garibaldi, early
discussions with Kresge about revitalization efforts
at Livernois and Six Mile envisioned an economic
development organization aimed at attracting
new businesses. However, Garibaldi says Detroit’s
municipal bankruptcy filing in 2013 slowed the
planning process and caused organizers to reevaluate
their priorities. Garibaldi says he and the others realized that Live6 needed to start by engaging the neighborhood, and work back from there.

“We felt that focusing on the people was much more important than focusing on how we can attract more businesses and retail to the area,” Garibaldi says. “We felt that if we didn’t do something that could really stabilize the neighborhood, some of the areas that needed the assistance the most would probably get worse.”

With that in mind, Hood has held nearly 100 meetings with neighborhood business owners, block club leaders and other stakeholders. She’s recruited members from all of those groups to form a community advisory committee, which began meeting in March 2016.

One of the community members Hood met with was Watson, who was rehabbing a deserted storefront on Six Mile into the strip’s first coffee shop, Detroit Sip. Since she started working on the store last year, Watson says she’s received “nothing but positive feedback” from her neighbors. Passersby ask when the shop is opening; people drive by and honk horns. Watson describes a “contagious” sense of enthusiasm for bettering the neighborhood that she expects to translate to the Live6 planning process.

“Live6 hasn’t really fully been defined yet, which is the beauty of it,” Watson says. “We’re getting to participate in something that is not already established.”

Still, there’s plenty to solidify in terms of Live6’s specific vision for the neighborhood, Hood says. Increasing the area’s walkability, cleaning up alleys and encouraging more exchange between the area’s college students and neighborhood residents are all potential projects for Live6. But the overall plan will be shaped by what Garibaldi describes as “coordinated thinking” among neighborhood stakeholders.

“Everybody has some different thoughts about what we should do first,” he says. “By being able to bring everyone together, we will really be able to prioritize as a group. That’s really important.”

The turnaround leaders have in mind for the Livernois-Six Mile area can be difficult to imagine given the neighborhood’s current condition. As Hood chats about her plans for Live6, she stands in a mostly empty parking lot on Six Mile. Across the street is a stretch of dilapidated and vacant buildings. Just down the road, a liquor store is the block’s main source of activity.

But Hood sees beyond that with her vision of a lively, vibrant cultural corridor. It isn’t just as good as the neighborhood she grew up in — it’s better.

“I see people on the street,” she says. “I see green alleys. I see people riding bikes. I hear music. I smell different kinds of food. It’s just a culturally rich and vibrant place.”

DETROIT PROGRAM

Social Investing: Creating an Initiative to ‘Get Things Done’

Woodward Corridor Investment Fund

Detroit’s Midtown has been one of the brightest examples of the city’s revitalization over the past decade as business, nightlife and cultural activities have exploded in the neighborhood just north of downtown.

But even with its uptick in popularity, residential developers have faced challenges building there.

After the financial recession of 2008, property values failed to keep pace with increasing demand for new, amenity-rich housing in the neighborhoods. Traditional investors had serious doubts about whether they could make money there and were slow to provide developers with the capital needed to build, even as vacancy rates soared over 90 percent.

Detroiter seemed eager to live, work and play in the up-and-coming neighborhood, but they couldn’t find places to live, says Benjamin Kennedy, managing director of The Kresge Foundation’s American Cities Practice.

“What would truly help the neighborhood is housing that would cultivate the kind of diversity that suggests a healthy, vibrant, equitable place,” Kennedy says. “We knew that we needed to step in, because there was a market failure. That kind of forward-thinking project just wasn’t coming online in Midtown.”

Enter the Woodward Corridor Investment Fund (WCIF). In 2013, with a $5 million low-interest loan, Kresge helped roll out the $30 million initiative that offers long-term, fixed-rate loans for multifamily and mixed-use developments in the Midtown area. It pools $15.25 million in senior capital from PNC Bank, Prudential, MetLife and the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation with $15 million in subordinate capital.

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It took a lot of creativity and willingness on the foundation’s part to take some risk. They’re making a bet in Detroit that appears to be paying off.”

—Scott Sporte, Capital Impact Partners

The Kresge Foundation’s Kimberlee Cornett says it became evident in 2011 that Midtown Detroit was in need of amenity-rich, multifamily housing. But no one was building it.

“We wanted to really spur the pipeline of projects,” says Cornett, managing director of the foundation’s Social Investment Practice. “But at that time, banks had all but stopped lending in Detroit, and we knew money that would allow for a high loan-to-value ratio. The appraisals were low and out of whack. The cost of construction was high.”

So Cornett led the creation of the Woodward Corridor Investment Fund (WCIF), a $30 million fund offering long-term, fixed-rate loans for multifamily and mixed-use developments in the Midtown area.

Here’s how:

- An unofficial first step in the process came in 2009, before Kresge began considering ways to stimulate housing development in Midtown. While the financial markets were in turmoil, Kresge’s Detroit Program was providing grants in Midtown for projects like Kresge’s West Grand Boulevard, had been vacant for many years.

- After a $4 million renovation, it houses 58 apartments, along with retail space on the ground floor. Sporte says five more projects are currently under construction. Most involve renovating a vacant or blighted building.

- “This is infill, rehab housing that will improve the overall look and feel of the neighborhood,” Sporte says.

- Since the fund launched, it has demonstrated that investing in Detroit doesn’t have to be too risky. Similar initiatives and funds have formed that cite WCIF as their model — basically just trying to stabilize the area,” Cornett says. “So far, WCIF has been an extremely effective model. The fund’s first project, the renovated Regis House, opened in November 2015. The six-story building, connected to the St. Regis Hotel on West Grand Boulevard, had been vacant for many years.

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- Cornett says: “This fund would not have materialized had the foundation not invested the grant funds earlier. It’s a good example of how grant funds often are the first money in to stabilize the environment, to build the capacity with local partners and then you can come in with the investment capital to really scale it.”

- In November 2012, Kresge helped manifest a $30 million fund to invest in development of the Midtown area. The foundation invested $3.5 million of subordinate debt in the fund, and secured an additional $5 million in secondary debt from both the Calvert Foundation and Capital Impact Partners. Kresge also provided a guarantee capped at $1.5 million to the Calvert Foundation. In addition, the foundation secured senior debt from MetLife ($5 million), Prudential ($5 million) and PNC Bank ($5 million). The Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation contributed $250,000.

- Capital Impact Partners, which had recently opened a Detroit office after a decade of providing funding in the city, became the fund manager. “We had relationships with them, they were an experienced CDFI, and they were willing to bring their own money to it,” Cornett says. “They were a natural partner to be a fund manager for us.”

- The fund was publicly announced and began accepting proposals in 2013. Cornett notes that JPMorgan Chase largely replicated Kresge’s WCIF model with its own $50 million Detroit investment fund one year later. Several projects have now closed deals with WCIF, and one of them has been completed. “Now we’re getting ready to raise a second fund on the back of the first because demand for financing has been so high,” Cornett says.

SPURRING THE PIPELINE

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Arts and culture contribute to an essential quality of life that is vibrant, diverse and self-enriching. For that reason The Kresge Foundation has invested more than $3.5 million over the last eight years in the Kresge Arts in Detroit (KAID) initiative, which continues to influence the metropolitan region’s creative economy with its Artist Fellowships and Eminent Artist awards to artists living and working in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

“There are very few philanthropic organizations that support the individual artist,” says Richard Rogers, president of the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, which administers KAID. “The fellowships have really changed the artistic practices of these people and given them opportunities they didn’t have before.”

Iconic textile designer Ruth Adler Schnee, right, was named the 2015 Kresge Eminent Artist. The award, which includes a $50,000 prize, honors Schnee’s pioneering work in revolutionizing textile design in the post-World War II era. Schnee became the seventh artist recognized in this manner since 2008.

The 2015 Kresge Artist Fellowships awarded 16 metro Detroit artists and two collectives with unrestricted $25,000 prizes for their commitments to the fields of literary and visual art. In addition, artists also received a year of professional development support from Creative Many Michigan, a statewide organization dedicated to developing creative people, places and economies through research, advocacy, professional practice and communications.

In 2015, KAID also launched the Gilda Awards in commemoration of the late artist Gilda Snowden, beloved for her work guiding emerging talents. The two-year initiative will support the work of four artists with an unrestricted award of $5,000 to each recipient. Sacramento Knoxx (visual arts) and Maia Asshaq (literary arts) received awards in 2015.

Detroit jazz trumpeter and 2009 Kresge Eminent Artist Marcus Belgrave died May 24, 2015, at the age of 78.

“Active and influential on the world music stage, Belgrave proudly embraced Detroit and its musical community as his own.

“I think I helped to reestablish the cause of music in the city and to continue the quality of music Detroit has had in the past,” he said in 2009. “In the late 1950s, music became segmented, but Motown took the jazz musicians who remained and molded them into an entirely different industry in the 1960s.

“I kept the grassroots aspect of music together by working with youths in the schools and helped to rebuild Detroit’s music culture.”

With too many notes in him to pass so soon, he is missed by Detroit and the world.
**2015 Detroit Grants**

Supporting Our Hometown

The Detroit Program is dedicated to advancing tangible, sustainable, near- and long-term progress in the city. Our investments are fully aligned with the objectives and recommendations of the Detroit Future City (DFC) Strategic Framework. Published in 2013, the DFC framework weaves the knowledge of thousands of Detroiters with technical expertise to map the economic, physical and social transformation of Detroit.

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<td>Total Awarded</td>
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<td>$19,214,936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Michigan Environmental Council
Lansing, Mich.
$25,000

Michigan Environmental Council
Lansing, Mich.
$30,000

Michigan Environmental Council
Lansing, Mich.
$110,000

Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion
Detroit, Mich.
$225,000

Michigan Suburbs Alliance
Ferndale, Mich.
$20,000

Midnight Golf Program
Bingham Farms, Mich.
$75,000

Midtown Detroit, Inc. (Corktown Economic Development Corporation)
Detroit, Mich.
$100,000

Midtown Detroit, Inc.
Detroit, Mich.
$500,000

Museum of Contemporary Art
Detroit
Detroit, Mich.
$40,000

Opportunity Finance Network*
$125,000

Reading Works
Detroit, Mich.
$250,000

Smart Growth America
Washington, D.C.
$53,000

Southwest Detroit Business Association, Inc.
Detroit, Mich.
$70,000

Southwest Detroit Community Justice Center
Detroit, Mich.
$200,000

Southwest Housing Solutions Corporation
Detroit, Mich.
$100,000

THAW Fund
Detroit, Mich.
$75,000

Think Detroit PAL
Detroit, Mich.
$1,000,000

Third Sector New England (Early Childhood Funder’s Collaborative)
Boston, Mass.
$50,000

Transportation Riders United
Detroit, Mich.
$20,000

The Trust for Public Land
San Francisco, Calif.
$300,000

United Way for Southeastern Michigan
Detroit, Mich.
$50,000

University of Detroit Mercy
Detroit, Mich.
$40,000

University of Detroit Mercy
Detroit, Mich.
$400,000

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.
$135,000

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.
$300,000

University of Toledo*
Toledo, Ohio
$200,000

Urban Institute
Washington, D.C.
$190,000

Vanguard Community Development Corporation
Detroit, Mich.
$20,000

Vanguard Community Development Corporation
Detroit, Mich.
$330,000

Wayne State University
Detroit, Mich.
$60,000

Wayne State University
Detroit, Mich.
$750,000

Wayne State University
Detroit, Mich.
$1,500,000

Young Nation
Detroit, Mich.
$20,000

*Denotes cross-team grant