



Speech by Rip Rapson:

Announcing Live6, a new revitalization organization in Northwest Detroit

Lessons from New Orleans and Midtown Detroit can help guide effort anchored by the University of Detroit Mercy.

September 14, 2015

Delivered Sept. 1, 2015, at a press conference on the campus of University of Detroit Mercy announcing the formation of the Live6 Alliance. Live6 will coordinate and promote the revitalization efforts in the Livernois Avenue and McNichols Road (6 Mile Road) commercial corridor in Northwest Detroit. The organization is anchored by University of Detroit Mercy with support from The Kresge Foundation, the Detroit Corridor Initiative, the Detroit Economic Growth Corp., area neighborhood associations and other institutions.

I'm reminded of my first meeting with Dr. Antoine Garibaldi after he arrived in Detroit just four years ago as the new president of University of Detroit Mercy. From the very beginning, Dr. Garibaldi saw the needs and the opportunity of this corner of Livernois and 6 Mile. He saw the hunger of the neighboring community to be revitalized, and he saw the hunger of his university community to more deeply connect as a partner in that revitalization. He wanted to be a catalyst. And he came to Kresge and the city and others to bring us on board to help with some concrete, tangible things, like streetscape improvements, and to help begin to reknit the fabric of greatness here where many remember when Livernois – just a stone's throw to the north – was known as the Avenue of Fashion. And we and others came through to help with those things. But this has all been driven by Dr. Garibaldi's sense of urgency, his decency and his commitment to making this a better place to be.

If I'm allowed to digress, I might mention that Dr. Garibaldi hails from New Orleans. And while our entire country was gripped by the tragedy of 10 years ago this month, Dr. Garibaldi was one of those who sweated through the tense days of the flood, anxious for each bit of news about the fate of kin, loved ones, friends and associates. And likewise, he has followed the lessons of post-Katrina New Orleans. He has followed a recovery that many at the time thought would be impossible. Yet, in this case, that's not enough. Just doing

something that seemed impossible is not enough. Both the successes and continuing challenges of New Orleans contain lessons from which we have much to learn about an inclusive recovery in urban America. And, in fact, we've learned a lot already.

I speak after having just been in New Orleans last week for a gathering of foundation leaders – a gathering that included the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, J.P. Morgan Chase and many others. It was both awe-inspiring and humbling. We saw the proof that our foundations can work with local, regional and national partners on the ground to achieve results. We've supported efforts to build climate resilience, to support artists, to sustain educational institutions and build new housing. And when I say we supported efforts, what I really mean is we supported the community. If New Orleans has reaffirmed anything to us, it's the importance of community engagement and the importance of a related concept, building our civic capacity, which is simply the ability to join together and get things done.

To cite one important lesson: The community engagement of New Orleans' 21st Century Master Plan guided us in the inclusiveness of the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework and now helps Detroiters to harness the potential for our land – developed, underdeveloped and undeveloped – and for green infrastructure, for agriculture, for commercial and business development, for residential development, all building on the strength of new arrangements among all sectors of our community.

Organizations like Live6, whose genesis we are announcing with such high hopes today, are – and increasingly will be – essential in moving Detroit forward. We don't have to go all the way to New Orleans to see what engagement of community and institutions can bring about. We only have to go two miles to the east on McNichols and 10 miles south on Woodward to see the work of Midtown Inc. What for many decades has been recognized as the cultural heart of the city has come to beat stronger and stronger as a wide variety of cultural institutions, higher education institutions, medical institutions, commercial interests and others have come together in a single organization as stewards for their district.

The Live6 Alliance will be an outgrowth of this community – its character and its institutions – just as Midtown is an outgrowth of the Midtown community and its geography. Live6 promises to take the lessons of Midtown to build something as fine-tuned for and with this community to serve it as Midtown has done with its community.

So Dr. Garibaldi, I want to express Kresge's gratitude for letting us join here with you and with so many in this community. I think it's an extraordinary moment. I remember when we first engaged with Sue Mosey, with some of her plans for the revitalization of the Midtown area. They seemed almost grandiose. It was almost beyond conception 10 years ago that you could look at that place and see the kind of potential, the

richness, the diversity, the activity that Sue could see but that many of us couldn't. And I think that's what you represent today here. It's sometimes tough to see what the path is and how to reimagine a place with all of its complexity. But I think what's so incredible even today in this afternoon's turnout is to see the extraordinary passion and commitment and belief that this community holds for the future of this part of Detroit. It's an honor to be here. It's a privilege to be among so many people who work so hard to make this community a better place. And with your leadership, it's going to happen.

Read a [news story](#) about the Live6 Alliance announcement.

Watch a [video](#) of the announcement.

Hear a [radio interview](#) about the Live6 Alliance on WDET-FM's Detroit Today radio show. Host Stephen Henderson features University of Detroit Mercy President Antoine Garibaldi and Kresge President and CEO Rip Rapson.