



BRINGING
NEIGHBORHOOD
PROJECTS TO LIFE,
BLOCK BY BLOCK

YOUR GUIDE TO

Getting Good Done in Detroit

How to work with city government
to improve your neighborhood

GETTING GOOD DONE

Do you have an idea for a project to make your Detroit neighborhood better, but feel daunted by the prospect of working with the city?

The thought of dealing with red tape and bureaucracy can be intimidating, so we asked some of our favorite (and friendly!) Motor City officials to give us the straight skinny on how to approach city government, what to expect, and how they can help. Our biggest takeaways? It's not that hard, and you stand to gain a lot. Read on to see how!

Who we spoke to:



Jason Friedmann
Director of
Development - East
Region, Housing
& Revitalization
Department



Ryan Friedrichs
Chief Development
Officer,
City of Detroit



Daljit Benipal
Head Engineer, Zoning
and Plan Review
Division, Buildings,
Safety Engineering
and Environmental
Department

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Citizen-led projects

What projects does Housing & Revitalization work with?

Neighborhoods

When we put properties back into reuse, we often collaborate with local leaders in specific neighborhoods on the planning and development process. To put a master development plan into each neighborhood, we spend a lot of time working with citizen-led groups and building off of what they've done.

Local Groups

Not a lot of formal neighborhood planning was done in the past few decades, so we've been relying on local groups like Detroit Works Project, Detroit Future City, and the Lower Eastside Action Plan for help and guidance. That's changing now that the city is trying to take the lead more, but we're still building off what citizen leaders and groups have already accomplished.

Land Use

The city's active Land Bank Authority offers things like the Community Partner Program, which allows grassroots groups to submit proposals for leasing or purchasing land for things like community gardens, taking a lot of maintenance and concerns off our hands and making underutilized land productive!

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Working with the city

→ **Before you propose anything , talk to your neighbors!**

At least do some casual community outreach to make sure a good amount of your neighbors are on board with what you want to do. It's almost a given that not everyone will agree with you, but make sure that not everyone is against you!

→ **Once you know you'll have some backing, call your District Manager or Deputy Director [Search in the Neighborhoods Department to find yours].**

They run events like Angels Night, work with neighborhood building inspectors and police officers, and know all the block clubs., community development corporations, and community development financial institutions. They map out which foundations are working in the area, and they will help you navigate city hall. District Managers also have extensive support teams that can help.

DETERMINE WHICH AGENCY TO APPROACH

There are three main portals where citizen leaders in Detroit can go for hyper-local projects:

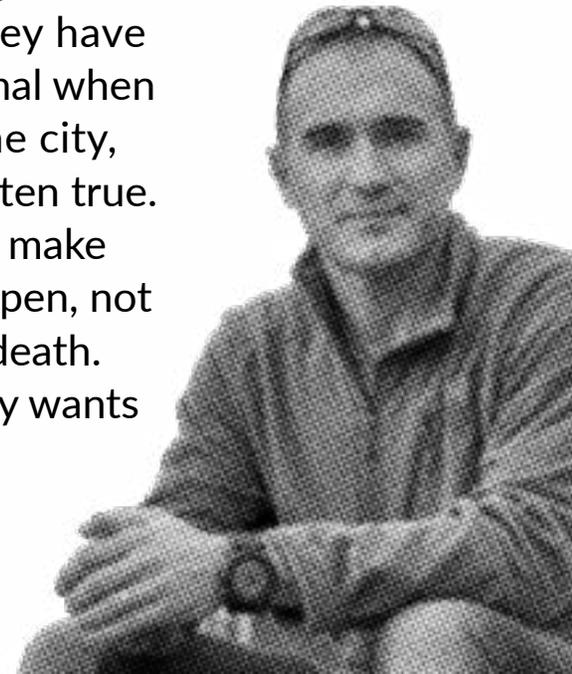
- 1** The Department of Housing & Revitalization
- 2** The Department of Yes! This is a new part of the Planning & Development Department. (We didn't want to keep giving people the default "no" for an answer.)
- 3** Your District Manager or Deputy Director

- 1** Know your ask! Presenting generally about an idea doesn't usually yield much. Be clear about what you want, and say it first thing—not in the last five minutes of your meeting.
- 2** Bring a handout that summarizes your project: what you want to do, who your potential partners are and their contact info, whether you want to use any city-owned property or close off any streets. Cover all the basics, and mention anything out of the ordinary upfront.
- 3** Be on time! Detroit is growing rapidly, and it can be hard to find parking near city buildings, so plan ahead. Being 10 minutes late to your meeting will start things off on the wrong foot.

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Prepare to meet officials

- 4** Do the research to understand who you're talking to and their roles.
- 5** A lot of people get nervous that they have to be super formal when meeting with the city, but that's not often true. We just want to make good things happen, not criticize you to death. So relax! The city wants to help!



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Apply for a permit

We have a pretty extensive list online that gives good information and offers downloadable forms. But before you start figuring out what you need on your own, come down and talk to someone in the **Building Safety & Engineering Department** about what you want and what it will take. (Or make a phone call, but doing it in person is better.)

For example, a large street fair permit takes six months to get and is expensive, whereas a block party permit is a much smaller deal—but you wouldn't know the difference between them just by reading the descriptions. So save yourself some time and come talk to the city first!

MORE TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE RESIDENTS

- Attend a city council or neighborhood meeting to see what it's like before you make your own formal presentation to a group.
- Remember that not everyone has access to the internet. Old-fashioned flyer-ing and door-to-door calls can really help you spread the word.
- Always be honest and explain clearly what you want to do, but also be open to others who might have a similar idea that you could join forces with.
- Dig deep for fundraising ideas. A lot of foundations are interested in Detroit right now, so it pays to do some real research.
- Be flexible! Your project might change over time, and that's okay!

KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

CITY RESOURCES

FIND YOUR DISTRICT MANAGER THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS:
detroitmi.gov/Neighborhoods

HOUSING & REVITALIZATION DEPARTMENT:
(313) 224-6380

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT:
(313) 224-1339

BUILDING SAFETY & ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT:
detroitmi.gov/bseed;
(313) 224-2733

INFO ON BLIGHT CLEARANCE PROCESS:
<http://www.detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/docs/BSEE/DAH-Blight-Clearance-Process.pdf>

INFO ON JOINING A BLOCK CLUB:
<http://www.detroitmi.gov/Detroit-Opportunities/Improve-Your-Neighborhood/Join-A-Block-Club>

THE CITY'S IMPROVE DETROIT APP IS AVAILABLE FOR IPHONE OR ANDROID. MORE INFO:
<http://www.detroitmi.gov/How-Do-I/Mobile-Apps/ImproveDetroit>

FULL LIST AND CONTACT INFO FOR ALL CITY AGENCIES:
detroitmi.gov/government/departments

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

LAND BANK AUTHORITY:
buildingdetroit.org,
communityrelations@detroitlandbank.org, 1-844-BUY-DLBA

INFO ON THEIR COMMUNITY PARTNER PROGRAM:
buildingdetroit.org/community-partnership-overview

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATES OF DETROIT (CDAD):
cdad-online.org; info@cdad-online.org;
(313) 832-4620

CDAD'S LIST OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS:
[/http://cdad-online.org/membership/member-directory/](http://cdad-online.org/membership/member-directory/)

DETROIT ECONOMIC GROWTH CORPORATION:
degc.org; (313) 963-2940

DETROIT FUTURE CITY:
detroitfuturecity.com;
313-259-4407

LOWER EASTSIDE ACTION PLAN:
(313) 331-3427;
facebook.com/LEAPDetroit

MICHIGAN COMMUNITY RESOURCES:
mi-community.org; info@mi-community.org; 313.962.3171

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN:
cedam.info; 517.485.3588



Learn more about how you can make your Detroit neighborhood safer, greener, and more livable:

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ABOUT IOBY

ioby mobilizes neighbors who have good ideas to become powerful citizen leaders who plan, fund and make positive change in their own neighborhoods. We are creating a future in which our neighborhoods are shaped by the powerful good ideas of our own neighbors.