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OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION

DETROIT
FUTURE
CITY

ideas for innovation

THE DETROIT FUTURE CITY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK was released in 2013 after a robust community engagement process, establishing a clear vision for the city and a framework for decision-making. As a part of that effort - DFC's Ideas for Innovation is a program series designed to connect the DFC Strategic Framework, Detroiters, and the DFC Implementation Office together to engage in dialogue on moving the city forward.

On April 14, 2015, the Detroit Future City Implementation Office convened a group of leaders for the first in this series of events. The event, called 'The Making of a Great City,' involved a keynote address followed by a panel discussion. The participants discussed the key ingredients needed for innovation to truly flourish within the city—including the need for alignment around a shared vision, strong civic leadership, continued commitment to civic design, and participatory implementation.

Framing speaker:

DAN KINKEAD

Director of Projects
Detroit Future City

Presenters:

LYDIA GUTIERREZ

President & Chief Executive Officer
Hacienda Mexican Foods

Moderator:

JENN WHITE

Host of All Things Considered
Michigan Radio

WILLIAM JONES

Chief Executive Officer
Focus: HOPE

What is innovation?

Innovation is at the center of Detroit's inclusive recovery. Yet the word "innovation" is used so often that its meaning tends to get a little obscured.

Rather than the narrow definition of technological advancement, the meaning of innovation we should use in Detroit is about doing things differently, redefining our future, and challenging ourselves to move beyond business as usual.

Innovation in this way is not an objective in itself—it's not a new product, for example—rather it is a collection of new means and methods by which Detroiters can help to create substantial and sustainable change.

Innovation in Detroit should incorporate thoughtful and effective concepts, policies, and resources that will:



Increase employment

and residential density through focused, equitable growth.

Stabilize neighborhoods

by supporting residents and their ideas, ensuring the amenities and city services we need to thrive.

Transform existing land

and building vacancies into an integrated network capable of yielding new approaches to food, energy, recreation, and urban ecology that are unseen in other cities.

Who innovates?

We are all innovators. We have the unique opportunity to create solutions to today's problems by thinking differently than we did yesterday. Two local leaders shared their stories of Detroit innovation to serve as models for the city leaders in attendance.



WILLIAM JONES

CEO of Focus: HOPE

At Focus: HOPE, they are implementing innovative leasing agreements for manufacturers that include provisions to ensure Detroiters are trained and employed so that everyone grows together.

Focus: HOPE continues to commit to its neighborhood through its "Keep It 100" program—an annual convergence of residents and volunteers to clean, stabilize, and revitalize the HOPE Village 100 block area.



LYDIA GUTIERREZ

President & CEO of Hacienda Mexican Foods

Lydia Gutierrez founded Hacienda Mexican Foods with her late husband around 1990. Starting with five employees, Hacienda now employs 80 workers in Southwest Detroit, producing a line of tortillas, chips and other products.

At Hacienda Mexican Foods, Gutierrez stresses the company's commitment to its employees and the neighborhood. They go the extra mile to write personal notes on paychecks and inquire about employees' lives and families, recognizing the powerful social impact when neighbors are given dignified opportunities to earn a living.

How do we innovate?

Each of us has our own story of innovation—where we move beyond business as usual and apply new strategies to today’s challenges.

Below are a few illustrative examples of innovation in neighborhoods throughout the city:

Detroit Sidewalk Festival of Performing Arts

A resident-led initiative to creatively activate underutilized space in the Brightmoor neighborhood. Neighbors bring local artists and residents together to animate city streets, creating a dynamic environment that demonstrates the intrinsic value of public space in our neighborhoods.

ProsperUS

A group dedicated to empowering communities and entrepreneurs to transform low-income neighborhood economies through more formal organization between residents, neighborhood groups, and small businesses.

Keep Growing Detroit

A resident network that informs and supports others to create a healthier, food sovereign Detroit through the use of vacant land.

Why do we innovate?

Detroit's statistics are daunting. It has lost 60 percent of its peak population and 90 percent of its industrial jobs while amassing more than 23 square miles of vacant land. But if we only dwell on these grim realities, we will most certainly miss the ways in which each of us can shape a new future for the city.

With thoughtful, innovative, and effective policies and projects, Detroiters can achieve greater population density, have more stable neighborhoods, and build an open space network to create a fiscally, socially, and ecologically thriving city.

Many have already committed to building an inclusive and innovative future for Detroit. You can take an active role in impacting Detroit's future by putting your own passion, effort and expertise into an innovative project. The more who contribute, the quicker we can build a city that sees beyond its present condition to build a shared future.



BUILDING YOUR INNOVATION MINI-STORY

Now it's time for you to create your own innovation story.

Here are a few tips:

What is your idea? Define your purpose & form a clear introduction.

Why does your idea matter? Hook your listener & make them care.

What do you want the listener to remember? Repeat key information.

Name your idea and emphasize why it is important – what will it achieve?

How is it meaningful and impactful to the listener?

What do you need for your idea to be successful? Focus on what matters.

Be clear about what support you need for your idea to be successful.

Ideas for Innovation

Open a community woodworking and skilled trades shop, where working and retired tradesmen can help train members of their communities

Repurpose, rebuild, and remanufacture appliances and furniture for reuse

Establish a youth ambassadors program for neighborhoods

Create a registry for volunteers and mentors that would be willing to help young entrepreneurs and activists

These ideas were shared by event participants



John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation

