STRENGTHENING
THE CITY’S
NEIGHBORHOODS
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 June 25, 2015 Detroit Future City Implementation Office convened
residents and neighborhood leaders for the third in this series of
six events. The event, called ‘Strengthening the City’s Neighborhoods,’ involved
a keynote address followed by three breakout workshops.
Gil Penalosa as part of the “Move Detroit” week of lectures and workshops set
an inspirational vision of neighborhoods that work for
all residents. This keynote was followed by three workshops led by
local experts that promoted a deeper understanding of topics that can take
great ideas to action.

Keynote Speaker:
GIL PEÑALOSA
Founder and Chair of the
Board of 880 Cities,
Chair of the Board of World
Urban Parks,
Urban Expert for the Danish
firm Gehl Architects

Workshops:
1. Bringing Back the People!
   Animating Your Public Space
2. How to Conduct a Safe Route to School
   Neighborhood Walking Audit
3. Resourcing Your Idea

Moderator:
SARAH HULETT
Assistant News Director
at Michigan Radio
Creating a vibrant Detroit for all

“If what you are doing in your neighborhood would be good for an 8 year old and also an 80 year old, then it will cover everyone’s needs in between.”
—GIL PEÑALOSA

Gil Peñalosa and 880 cities promotes vibrant and innovative public spaces for all. While he inspires audiences globally—these key messages are especially relevant as we work to strengthen our Detroit neighborhoods:

- It is not about the money your city has, it is about how you prioritize quality of life. As a community you must prioritize what is nice to have and what you MUST have. Next, communicate that to policy makers.
- Linear parks are important because they connect neighborhoods—high income with low income, residential with commercial. Also, you must incorporate wayfinding and safety measures to make them successful.
- Small parks in neighborhoods play an important role in developing a sense of community and solidarity. This contributes to safety.
- Connect neighborhood-scale projects to bigger investment for maximum impact.
- There are CAVE people (Citizens Against Virtually Everything), but you have to challenge the way things have always been done. Let your government know their role is to find solutions instead of roadblocks.
Animating your public space

Animating neighborhood parks through low-cost, high-impact community projects can boost community engagement. Here are some tips from 880 Cities to keep in mind:

- The best parks are not focused on winning design awards, but on having the most uses. Plan for everyday—including activities until late at night in the summer and throughout the winter.
- Have consistent programming and advertise it so people know when to come and keep coming back.
- Try new things! Activities and infrastructure can be temporary to help you understand what works. Observe, talk to participants and incorporate feedback into your future implementation.
- Partner with organizations that are located near your park. Help these organizations understand the benefits of the space so they can advocate for, and potentially contribute to, improving it.
- Establish leadership within neighborhood organizations—they will be the eyes and ears for maintenance, coordination with other entities, making decisions, and exploring new ideas.
Conducting a safe routes to school walking audit

Safe Routes to School promote exercise and more activity in the neighborhood. Walking around the neighborhood and the school with a group will help you gather data on conditions around your local school as an important tool to improve student safety.

1. **Here are key questions to answer and record as a first step to identify and communicate issues:**
   - Is the sidewalk width adequate? Well maintained? Continuous & connected to a larger network?
   - Is there adequate separation between traffic and pedestrians?
   - Are there things in the right-of-way? (ex. cars, trash, branches)
   - Are there accommodations for people with visual impairments or mobility issues?
   - Are vehicles following the speed limit and stopping at signs?
   - Are the crosswalks, signs, and signals adequate? Can you see around parked cars to cross the street?
   - Where are there issues of personal safety? (overgrown lots, vacant and open houses, illegal activity, feral animals)
   - Is there a safe way for pedestrians and bicyclists to get to the school entrance?
   - Is there adequate bicycle parking?

2. **Now Discuss with your Group:**
   - What problems did you find?
   - What are your highest priority issues?
   - What initial recommendations do you have? (remember to consider both infrastructure and noninfrastructure solutions)
   - What short-term treatments can you implement now?
   - What are the next steps?
Resourcing your idea

When moving from ‘Idea to Action’ in your neighborhood, finding help and funding can be a barrier. Here is some advice from local experts to help you move forward:

- Tell a compelling story about your project, your work, and your organization. Lift up what makes you stand out from the crowd.
- Engage residents at the grassroots level and create a goal together. That shared vision can help you utilize the assets in your community.
- Keep trying and don’t be afraid of failures. Grants are not set up for long term funding, so be prepared for one time and one time only. Think about sustainability for your work going forward.
- Consider alternative funding sources such as volunteerism, individual giving and crowdfunding.
- Leverage smaller funding sources (example: mini-grants and crowd funding) to garner more resources.
- Grants are often a result of cultivating relationships; it can take a while to get to the actual money part.
What can you do to help strengthen the city’s neighborhoods?

Connect to organizations, events and great ideas across the city:
MICHIGAN COMMUNITY RESOURCES/NEIGHBORHOOD EXCHANGE
neighborhood-exchange.com

Learn more about Safe Routes to School strategies and implementation:
MICHIGAN FITNESS FOUNDATION
saferoutesmichigan.org

Receive advice on how to start organizing and improving your neighborhood park:
GREENING OF DETROIT COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS
greeningofdetroit.com

Present your idea to your neighbors and pitch for funding:
DETROIT SOUP
detroitsoup.com

Join with and learn from other neighborhood groups across Detroit:
CDAD
cdad-online.org

Learn more about great public spaces across the world:
880 CITIES
880cities.org

Advocate for making Detroit more bike and pedestrian friendly:
DETROIT GREENWAYS COALITION
detroitgreenways.org
“What if our children could go places without being driven around?” — Gil Peñalosa

@KATIEJOHAN

CAVE people — citizens against virtually everything.
Let’s work together for neighborhood change

@BAYOUBLLE

Public space is a symbol of equality + democracy.
In a public space we’re all the same

@PENALOSA_G OF 88OCITIES.ORG

Urgency, political will, leadership, citizen engagement, and broad alliances key ingredients for change

@REGINABELL

“You have challenges but more than challenges you have wonderful opportunities.” — @Penalosa_G

@DETFUTURECITY

#DFCIdeas