



# Detroit's physical environment is as important to the city as the people who live here.

Detroit was built to house 2 million people, and the steady decline over the past 60 years has come to define the city. There is now a revitalization underway in parts of the city, notably in the Greater Downtown, but also extending to several of the outlying neighborhoods. Detroit is on the verge of revitalization and conditions are improving throughout the city, even though the effects of 60 years of decline can still be felt in many neighborhoods.

Detroit has been and continues to be a dynamic place. Throughout its history, the city has been in a constant state of change, and today's Detroit is no different. This section explores the physical aspects of the city, its housing stock, housing market, and some of the features that have come to define Detroit in its more recent years.

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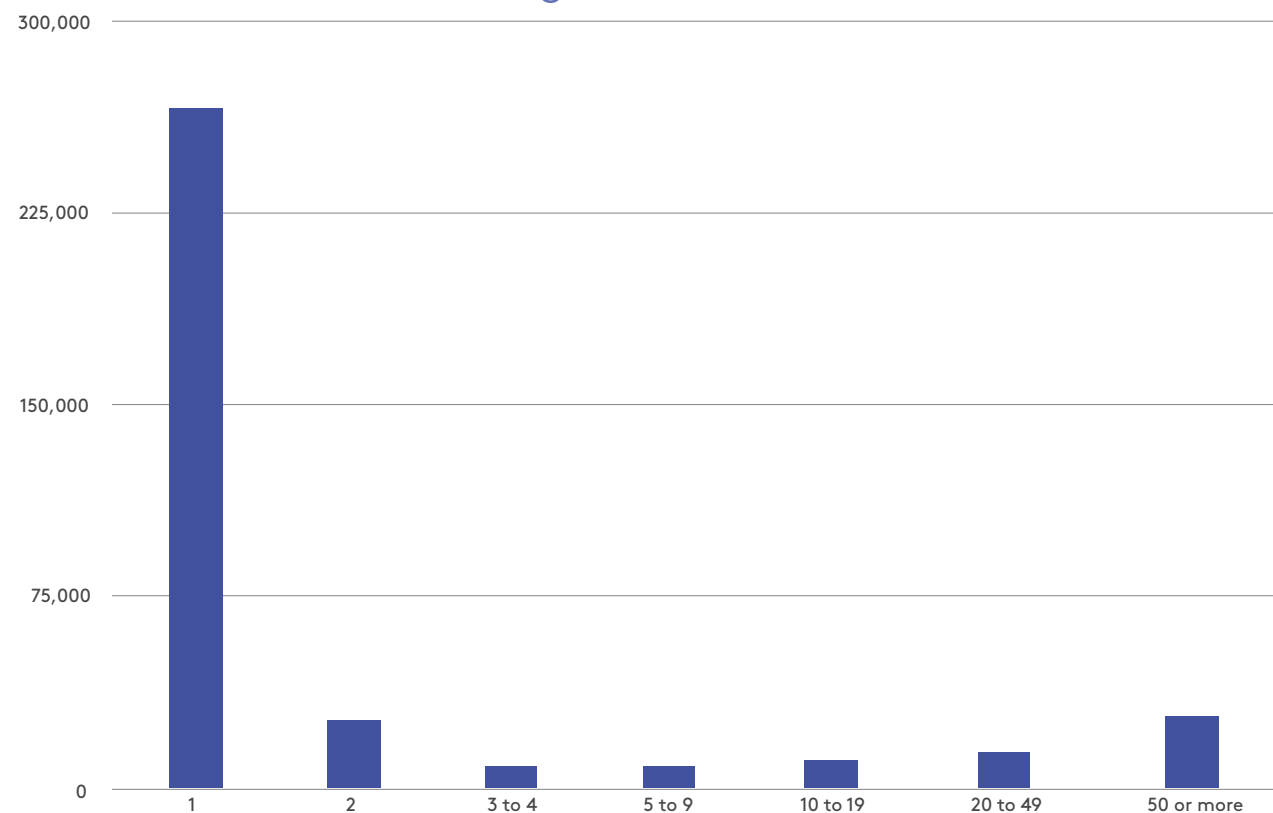
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# Housing Type

One of the defining features of Detroit is its large stock of single-family housing, which makes up 73% of the city's housing. Over the past 60 years, the share of single-family housing stock in the city has increased. There has been a 73% decline in two-family housing, and a 69% decline in three- to four-unit buildings.

## Housing Units in Structure



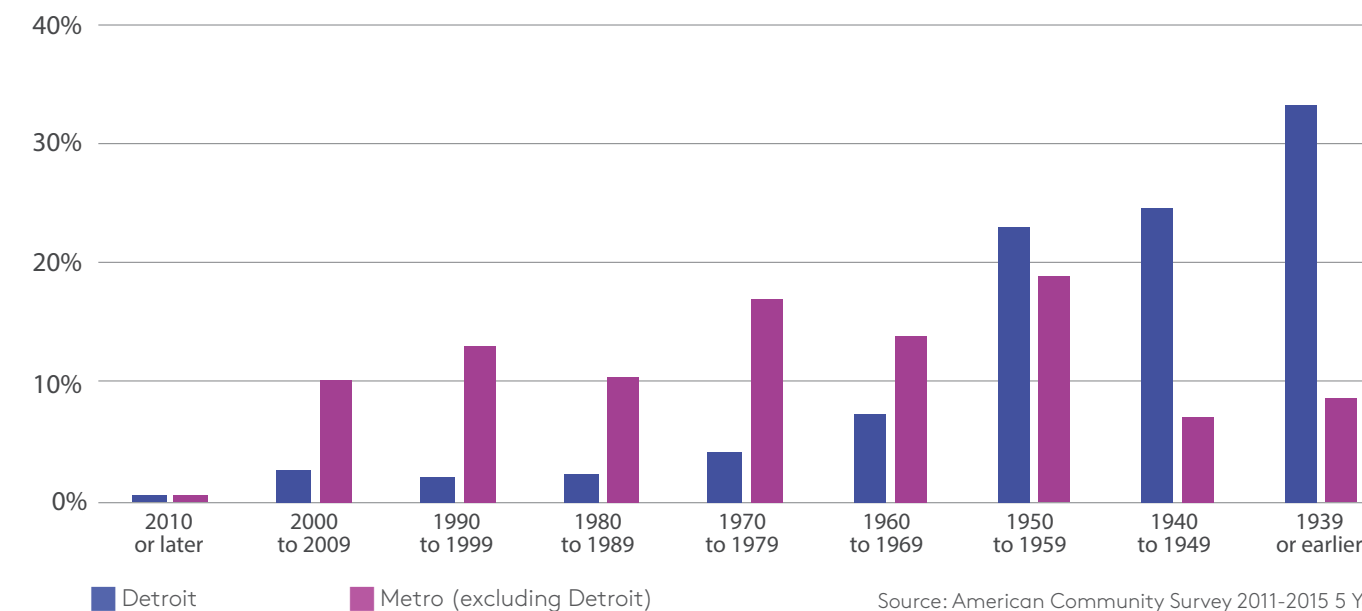
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.

# Year Structure Built

The age of Detroit's housing stock reflects a period of rapid growth during the first half of the 20th century, continuing through the 1950s. Though the city's population peaked in 1950, the housing shortages of the war and post-war period led to the continued construction of housing until 1960. Since then, relatively little housing has been built in the city; as a result, 92% of Detroit's housing stock was built before 1980. Much of the growth in the region has occurred outside the city, with 29% of the region's housing units being built after 1980.

The age of the housing stock poses an important health issue because before 1978, lead was used in paint. The age of housing and its declining condition is a contributing factor to the number of children in Detroit with elevated blood-lead levels each year. Exposure to lead can negatively affect mental and physical development and create behavior and learning problems.

## Year Structure Built



Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.



# Vacancy

The number of vacant housing units in the city doubled between 2000 and 2010. As the city's population has continued to decline, the number of vacant housing units has continued to increase. Currently, the American Community Survey reports that 30% of Detroit's housing, or 109,788 units, are vacant.

In addition to vacant housing, the population loss has also contributed to vacancy in other buildings, such as schools, storefronts, and industrial sites. This large number of abandoned structures has become one of the defining features of the city.

Housing units  
**365,528**

Vacant housing units  
**109,788**

Vacancy rate  
**30%**

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.



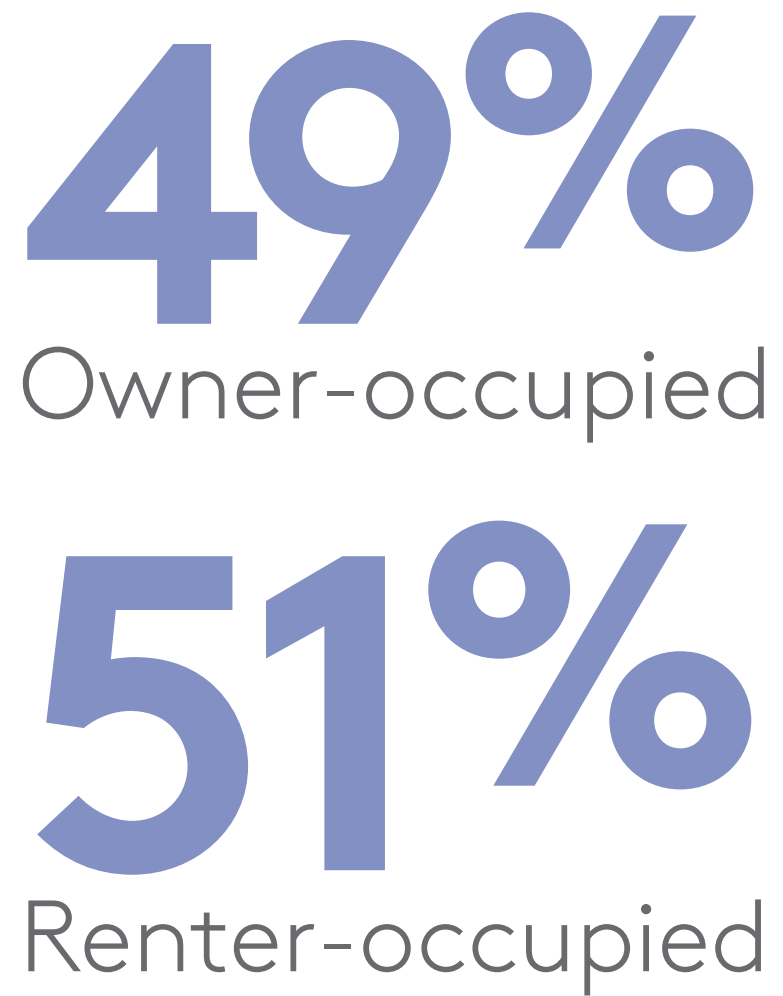




# Home Ownership

The vast amount of single-family housing in the city has led to its reputation for high rates of homeownership, particularly among African Americans. Over the past decade, there has been a decline in the number of homeowners in the city, and for the first time since 1950, renters make up the majority of households in Detroit.

Many neighborhoods have seen a shift, as the number of owner-occupied homes decreased and the number of renters increased. The number of renters living in single-family housing also has increased between 2000 and 2015. In Detroit, the paradigm of renters living in multi-family housing and homeowners living in single-family housing is a thing of the past. Fifty-four percent of Detroit’s renters live in single-family housing.



Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.



# Housing Market

Home values are increasing in most areas of the city, but remain well below values in the surrounding region. The median home sale price in Detroit, after sinking to \$18,000 in 2011, has increased to \$19,070 in 2015. The number of mortgages in the city has also increased since 2011, although they remain at low levels compared to other cities across the country.

Hundreds of new multi-family apartments have come on the market in the Greater Downtown area, and hundreds more are under development there, reflecting a growing demand for dense, walkable, urban neighborhoods close to jobs and other amenities.

Detroit has been challenged with a large number of foreclosures, most notably the thousands of tax foreclosures that have occurred over the past decade, including the 8,313 properties in Detroit scheduled to enter the foreclosure auction in 2017.

**Detroit's**  
median home sale price in 2015  
**\$19,070**

Source: [www.policymap.com](http://www.policymap.com), Loveland Technologies.







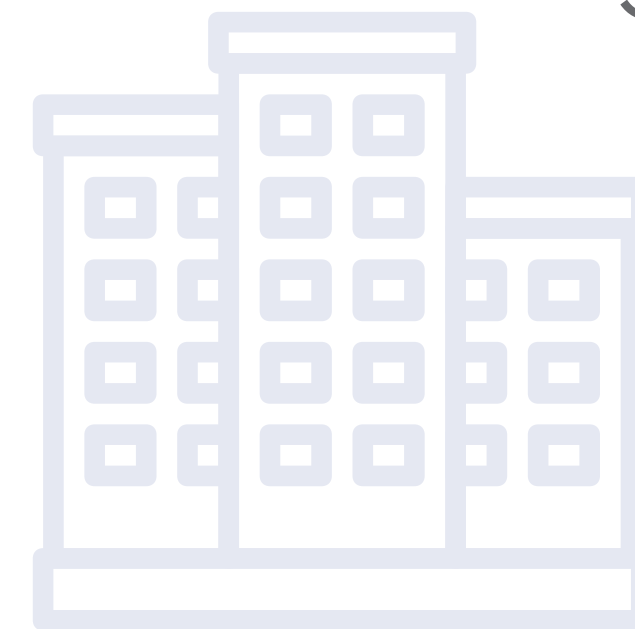
# Affordability

Detroiters face serious issues with the affordability of housing. Fifty-eight percent of renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Thirty-seven percent of renters spend more than 50% of their income on housing. In many locations across the country, the main driver of housing affordability issues is cost of housing. This is not the case in Detroit where housing costs in many neighborhoods are very low and income levels create challenges with affordability. Although rental rates are steadily increasing in areas such as Downtown and Midtown, the median gross rent for a two-bedroom unit in Detroit remains around \$750 per month, which is \$130 less per month than the region.

**58%** of renters in Detroit are cost-burdened.

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.

**37%** of Detroit renters spend **more than 50% of their income** on housing.







# Public and Subsidized Housing

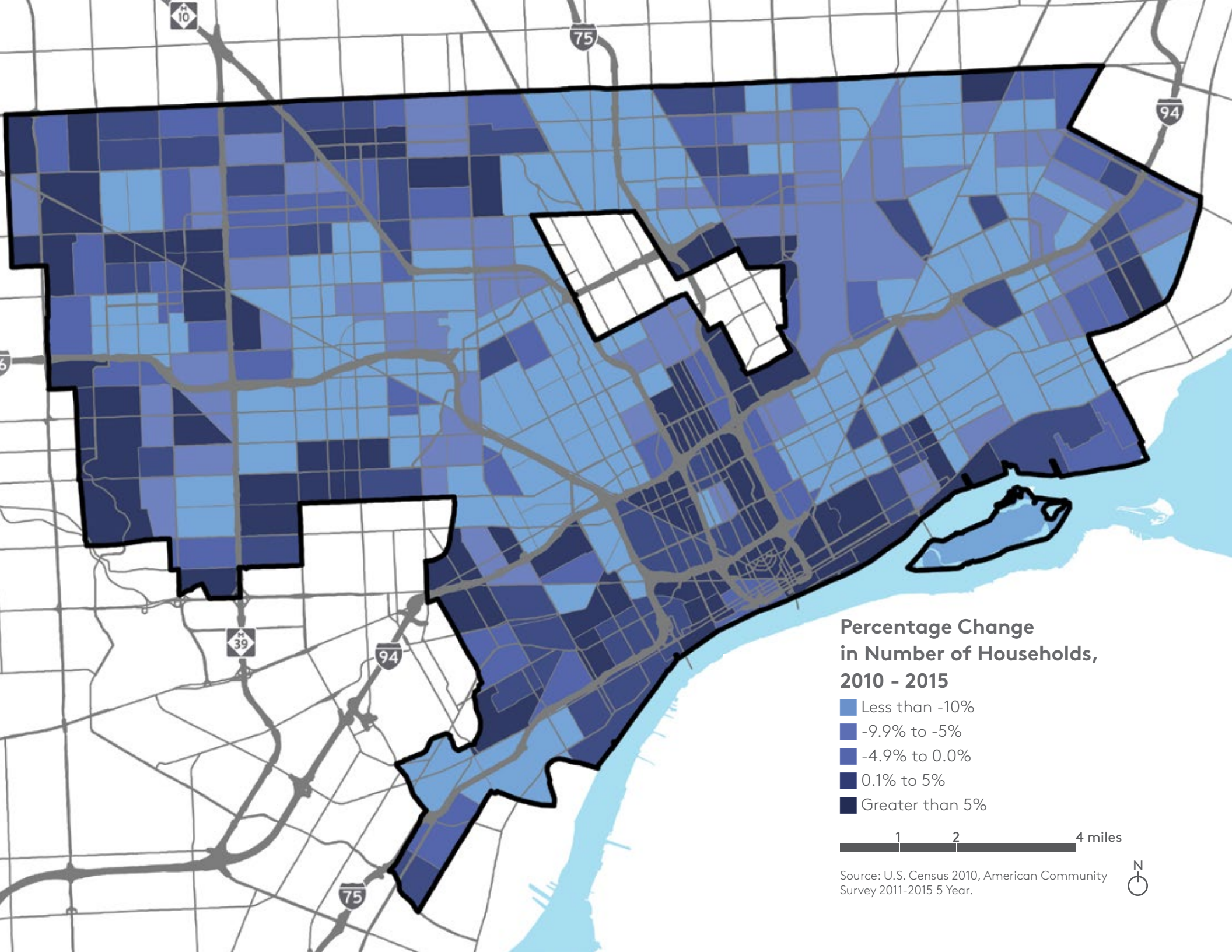
In cities such as Detroit, subsidized housing can take many forms. Detroit has many traditional forms of subsidized housing, including 4,343 public housing units, more than 13,000 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) units, and 10,374 Housing Choice Vouchers. These units fill only a fraction of the demand for low-cost housing across the city. Furthermore, there are 2,200 HUD-supported units scheduled to expire over the next two years, which could increase in cost if they convert from subsidized to market rate.

Subsidies also take other forms, such as Neighborhood Enterprise Zones – which provide property tax abatements to homeowners – or Renaissance Zones, which provide a range of tax abatements, and are intended help encourage investment and redevelopment.

Program	Units
LIHTC	13,313
House Choice Voucher	10,374
HOME	7,011
Public Housing	4,343

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.





# Stabilization

Detroit is in the early stages of recovery. Although much attention is paid to the revitalization of the Greater Downtown, there are other neighborhoods that are stabilizing and seeing an increase in the number of households and a decrease in vacancy.

The recovery can also be seen in the new construction underway in the city. Detroit is currently leading the region in new residential units permitted, the majority of these being multi-family units, located in Downtown and Midtown and along the Riverfront.

Detroit is currently **leading** the region with **1,076 new residential permits** issued in 2016.

Source: SEMCOG.





# Blight

In 2014, the Detroit Blight Removal Task Force found that 40,077 structures met its definition of blight, and another 38,429 showed indicators that they would likely become blighted in the future. In total, this amounts to 78,506 structures that would likely need intervention. Ninety-two percent of these buildings are single-family or small-scale multi-family.

Though much of the attention is paid to abandoned structures, blight also takes the form of unkempt vacant lots with unmowed grass or illegal dumping, which is hard to quantify, given its rapidly changing nature.

In 2014, Detroit had  
**40,077** Blighted structures  
**38,429** Structures that show indicators to become blighted in the future

Source: Detroit Blight Removal Task Force, 2014



# Demolition

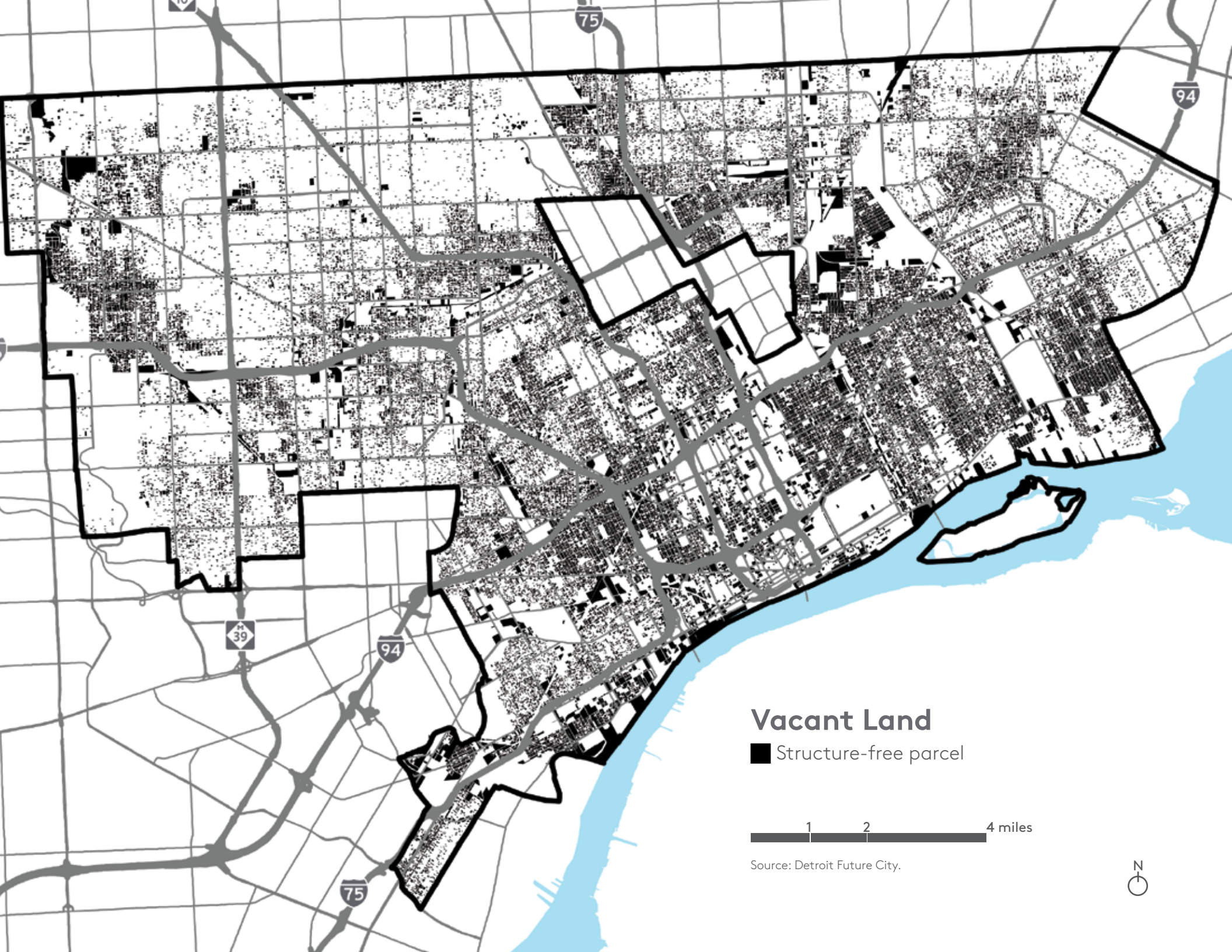
Since 2014, the city has accelerated the pace of demolition and razed more than 11,800 vacant structures. The pace of the demolition program earned the City the recognition of running the largest demolition program in the country.

There have been  
**11,847**  
 blighted structures  
 demolished since 2014.

Source: City of Detroit.







# Vacant Land

Detroit has more than 24 square miles of vacant land, not including the city's park land. This represents more than 120,000 parcels that were once housing or commercial or industrial businesses.

Though there are many areas where vacant land dominates the community, the majority of vacant parcels are small and interspersed within neighborhoods. When all adjacent parcels are combined, 44% are part of a group of parcels containing three lots or fewer.

The 24 square miles of vacant land does not account for those parcels that have been returned to productive use in the form of urban agriculture, green stormwater infrastructure or other productive reuses.

Source: Detroit Future City, City of Detroit.

**24** square miles  
of vacant land

Publicly owned  
**72,173**  
vacant parcels





# Parks

Detroit is the home to **308 parks**, and **12 recreation centers**.

In addition to the city parks, there are two state parks: Belle Isle and Milliken State Park. The system also includes a wide range of parks, from regional parks, such as Rouge Park, to small parks nestled within the community.

Detroit ranks 75th out of a 100 cities using the Trust for Public Land's (TPL) ParkScore, which bases its ratings on acreage of parks, investment and amenities, and access. There have been improvements over the last few years, with 10 parks renovated in 2016 and 30 more slated for upgrades in 2017.

Source: City of Detroit, Trust for Public Land.

Recent park renovations  
**10** in 2016  
**30** planned for 2017

**75 out of 100**  
on TPL's ParkScore