

## Land Use & Sustainability

Detroit Future City (DFC) helps connect Detroiters with information and inspiration, as well as others who are working toward local resiliency. We are working toward a future where residents and institutions, local and national land use experts alike, are actively involved in the stewardship of Detroit's land.

### The Need for Vacant Land Transformation

There are more than 120,000 vacant lots, — 24 square miles of vacant land — across Detroit's 139 square miles. More than 71 percent of these vacant lots are located in areas where nearly half of the residents live in poverty, and nearly 90 percent are minorities. Residents of these neighborhoods are heavily impacted by untended vacant land, aging water infrastructure and increasingly unpredictable weather conditions and the flooding they can bring.

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department's (DWSD) combined sewerage system is used to transport both wastewater and stormwater in the same pipe, and does not have the capacity to process heavy rainfalls. This can cause flooding and threatens human health and safety, as well as pollutes local rivers. Open space in urban areas can help to reduce flooding and sewer overflows by absorbing large amounts of stormwater, both replenishing the groundwater supply and preventing the need for the water to be channeled through our sewers. Additionally, DWSD is updating its billing system to spread the cost of drainage across the city based on impervious acreage. The stormwater rate adjustment will increase the interest in using land to acquire stormwater credits to mitigate costs, and increase demand for expertise in designing, planting and maintaining green stormwater solutions.

### Land Use and Sustainability Strategic Goals

To advance the city's ability to create a green and sustainable city unlike any other in the world, Detroit Future City is taking a three-pronged approach over the next five years, which includes:

- Advancing open space as a land use through policy change, public/private partnerships and publications.
- Supporting the ecosystem of Detroit nongovernmental organizations to reduce stormwater overflows.
- Building capacity across sectors to measure the scale of vacant land transformation.

### Land Use and Sustainability Programs

DFC has conducted research related to open-space planning and developed programs to empower residents and stakeholders with tools and information to begin addressing how to best use the city's vacant land. This includes:

- **"Field Guide to Working with Lots":** A user-friendly tool that offers Detroiters step-by-step instructions on how to transform vacant land in their neighborhoods.
- **"Achieving an Integrated Open Space Network in Detroit":** A report that takes the essentials of the DFC Strategic Framework around open space and outlines a set of considerations that advance the vision of transforming vacant land into a cohesive open-space network.
- **"Open Space in Detroit":** A report that helps to advance the transformation of Detroit's vacant land into an open-space amenity through addressing two key barriers: ownership of open space and how to fund its use.
- **Land + Water WORKS:** A campaign led by DFC to amplify Detroiters as land and water stewards through education and installation of green stormwater infrastructure and to help residents transition to DWSD's restructured drainage fees.
- **Working with Lots Mini-Grants:** A program that financially supports the installation, activation and maintenance of Field Guide designs paired with comprehensive technical assistance.



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