

## NORTH CORKTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

*Sustainable Development Task-Force Plan*

*GIVING THE COMMUNITY A*

*"DOCUMENTED VOICE"*



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# Acknowledgements

The North Corktown Sustainable Development Taskforce is a resident-driven committee of the North Corktown Neighborhood Association. The development of this document was supported by the Detroit Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Detroit LISC), ProSeeds, and Congress of Communities (COC).

We thank the following groups and individuals for their time and contributions:

## Community Residents

North Cork residents who attended our Task-force and community meetings

## Community Groups and Businesses

ACRE Farm  
Brother Nature Produce  
Detroit Hostel  
Detroit LISC  
Greater Dequindre Church Ministries  
Heritage Works  
Pomarium et Hortus St. Gall Farm  
Spirit of Hope Church

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# Introduction

North Corktown was originally part of Corktown proper, but was separated from the overall neighborhood when I-75 was built in the 1956. With Midtown and Core City neighborhoods to the north and Motor City Casino to the east, the neighborhood is still connected to Corktown via roads and walkways over the interstate to Michigan Avenue.

North Corktown is markedly different than other Detroit neighborhoods. The neighborhood is characterized by extensive green space, profitable urban farms, and numerous informal gathering spaces.

Besides being within walking distance of Downtown, North Corktown also:

- Has extensive vacant land
- Is experiencing significant increases in property values
- Is located within a 7-minute drive of Little Caesars Arena

**Residents are deeply concerned that redevelopment plans include resident input and maintains the ecologic and aesthetic values of the open space.**

The following plan was developed by the Sustainable Development Task-force through resident engagement.

It is designed to provide guidance to the City of Detroit Planning Department and other development entities that are preparing redevelopment plans for the neighborhood.



## Target Area Facts

*Area:* 0.59 SQUARE MILES

*Population:* 1,609 residents

*Art and Parks:*

Cochrane Birdhouses

Fish Park

Intersections Park

Mary Ellen Riordan Mural

Monumental Kitty

Nagel Field

North Corktown Pheasant

Rosa Parks & Temple Park

*Iconic Detroit locations:*

Cork Town Studios

Covenant House

Goodwill Industries

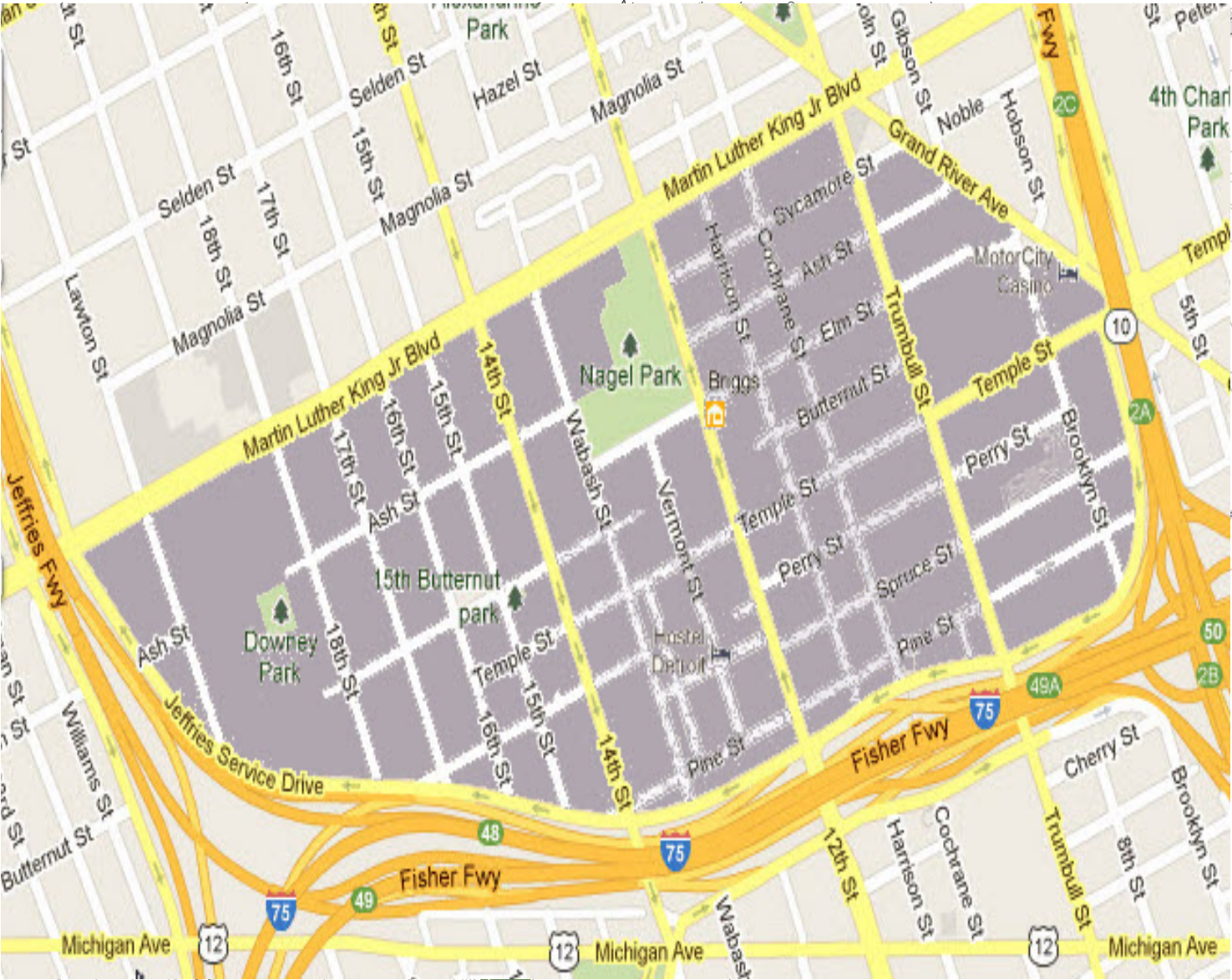
Hostel Detroit

Motor City Casino

Spirit of Hope Church

Teamsters Local Union No. 37

# North Corktown Area Map



*A neighborhood is an idea that develops emergently, and it's based on the characteristics of its people, architecture, and geography. Whether an area is considered part of a neighborhood or not can change over time, or not even be completely agreed up on from the start."*

- Paul Swecyk, "Corktown's Blurry Borders", Corktown History Blog, post on December 19, 2013

## Vision and Values

The North Corktown Sustainable Development Task-force is sharing the residents' vision and values to guide the development in North Corktown in advance of preparation of the Request for Proposals (RFP) to be released by the City of Detroit.



### Vision

To ensure the preservation of open space and land in North Corktown is balanced with new development in a planned manner, and supports resident values.

### Values

Residents want development that leads to a new kind of Detroit neighborhood, incorporating the following values:

**Unified** – Ensure a unified plan that encompasses the whole neighborhood and strengthens connections to Woodbridge, Midtown, Southwest, and Historic Corktown

**Inclusive** – Engage as many residents as possible and build community as an integral part of the planning process

### Values - Continued

**Balanced** – Provide a balance of new development and preservation of open space that is maintained and managed with a mix of public and private strategies

**Equitable** – Supports a mixed income neighborhood that embraces the current working-class community with intentional planning that will not displace residents, is equitable, and allows current and new residents to all benefit from improved economics of the area

**Sustainable** – Ensure that all developments of housing, commercial and open space leads to an environmentally sustainable and healthier community

**Diverse** – Promote redevelopment that embraces a racially, ethnically, and income; diverse community

**Attractive** – Ensure high quality design that blends with the existing housing stock

## Planning Process

The planning process spanned 18-months, starting in October 2015.

The Task-force met regularly, and in June of 2016, with the guidance of Libby Levy, of ProSeeds, created an action plan, "Balancing New Development in North Corktown".

The Task-force meetings after June 2016 focused on the various projects within the "Balancing New Development in North Corktown" plan.

In 2017, with the assistance of Congress of Communities, the Task-force held "Let's Talk" sessions with North Corktown residents. The sessions were held to document the community's ideas on balancing new housing development with open space, retail stores needed for the neighborhood, and other creative uses of the neighborhood's extensive open space.



## Summary of the Plan

North Corktown Neighborhood Association Sustainable Development Task-force will Balance New Development in North Corktown by implementing the following projects:

- Assist local farmers in improving and expanding their farms
- Engage with residents and the City of Detroit on a plan that balances new housing development with open space
- Transform North Corktown Neighborhood Association vacant lots
- Improve and expand current green spaces
- Identify locations for new green uses
- Create a North Corktown Community Arts Center



## Neighborhood Conditions

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the land in North Corktown is vacant, and/or structure free (953 of 1,319 properties). The Detroit Land Bank Authority owns approximately 440 of these properties.

1600 people live in the community. It is home to long-time residents who have lived in the community for over 40 years. In the past 15 years, North Corktown has attracted some of the best community activists and urban agriculture pioneers within the City.

Many vacant lots have been improved with green venture businesses and community greenspace including: Brother Nature Farm, Bird Houses Community Art Park, Hope Takes Root Farm, Hostel Detroit Community Gathering Space, Intersections Park by Heritage Works, and the Monumental Kitty.

**Detroit Future City considers North Corktown Open Space Productive**, probably due to the community's vacant land and the other "green" community uses.

However, this massive amount of land along with the area proximity to Downtown, Midtown and Woodbridge has drawn the attention of many developers. The Detroit Land Bank has received at least three proposals from developers for the hundreds of lots located within the community.



## North Corktown – URBAN AGRICULTURE

With the development of the North Corktown Neighborhood Sustainable Development Plan, the North Corktown Sustainable Development Task-force held meetings with North Corktown residents to address the "Action Items" within the plan. These items are listed in the order that the meetings were held. With the first being:

➤ **Assist local farmers in improving and expanding their farms**

The North Corktown Neighborhood Association strongly supports agriculture projects in our neighborhood, and looks forward to working with the City to retain and nurture these businesses in the future.

Because North Corktown is considered a growth area in the City, North Corktown Neighborhood Association is advocating for the balance of new development with open space uses, including urban agriculture. The retention of agricultural businesses and the preservation of green space are vitally important to the strength and character of our community, and are a priority of North Corktown Neighborhood Association.

For over a decade, the local food economy has become an important part of the identity of North Corktown (an asset that attracts both residents and visitors). At a time when many were abandoning our city, urban agriculture has provided jobs, stability, and the transformation of vacant land into a productive landscape.

The many benefits of maintaining urban agriculture in our neighborhood are clear. Research has established that proximity to an urban farm raises property values, in one study by as much as 9.4% over 5 years. The presence of large, maintained green spaces like an urban farm has also been shown to reduce crime and lower stress while improving residents' sense of well-being and strengthening their pride of place.

In return, we support our farmers' growth by ensuring their access to land, and ask the Jobs & Economy Team, the Detroit Planning and Development Department, and the Detroit Land Bank Authority to work together to ensure this access.

The Task-force and all the North Corktown farmers (Acre Farm, Brother Nature Produce, Hope Takes Root and, Pomarium et Hortus St. Gall Farm) participated in the meetings held from November 2016 – January 2017.

In December 2017, the Task-force contacted Keep Growing Detroit, to ensure our farmers are supported by an organization which can advocate on their behalf in securing land.



## North Corktown – NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Next the North Corktown Sustainable Development Task-force reviewed “Action Item” of:

➤ **Engage with residents and the City of Detroit on a plan to balance new housing development with open space**

The “documented input” of the North Corktown community took place over two different meetings.

The first meeting was held February 8, 2017, at Spirit of Hope Church, with the assistances of Congress of Communities and LISC. 60-70 people active on Task-force were contacted and 25 people attended.

This meeting focused on the strengths, needs/ideas, and opportunities for the “Action Item” above.

**New housing development coming to North Corktown, was documented as a “strength”.**

The “needs and ideas” documented for new housing development in North Corktown gives insight to what North Corktown residents are concerned about:

- Low maintenance/affordable housing, balanced with what’s already coming in
- More businesses like coffee shops, and pharmacies
- Clean energy
- New housing should not affect current residents negatively
- Consider current residents first; assist them with paying for homes
- Mixture of historical and futuristic style housing; diversify housing styles
- Housing could look like a mansion, but actually be a multi-family apartment home
- Multi-family housing needed
- Maps at meetings
- No high-rises
- Ways to offset storm water charges
- Well-insulated housing
- Low-income housing available

New housing development in North Corktown opportunities raised the following concerns:

- Awareness about properties using clean energy
- Utilize old style of homes to keep culture, but update the energy, and efficiency
- Raise awareness about cost of clean energy, that it may be accessible and not raise cost of living



[Christian Hurtienne Architects](#)

# Green Space

At the same meeting held February 8, 2017, residents identified strengths, needs/ideas and opportunities for the Sustainable Development of Green Space within the neighborhood based on the following "Action Items":

- **Transform five North Corktown Neighborhood Association lots**
- **Improve and expand current green spaces**
- **Identify locations for new green uses on vacant land**

The "strengths" for Green Space in North Corktown, were documented as the following:

- Farming community
- Various gardens already exist
- Orchards
- Farmer's Market

The residents identified the following Green Space "needs and ideas":

- Pedestrian friendly
- Sidewalk rain guards
- Storm-water management
- Support farming community
- Space for regular trees
- Resting spaces
- Solar-powered lights
- Solar lights in alleys
- Connect to Riverwalk from Rosa Parks
- More playgrounds, basketball courts, etc.
- More benches and drinking water fountains
- Nature reserve
- Connect parks through greenways
- Greenways connected to Downtown/Riverwalk
- Signage explaining the space/greenways



## Green Space – continued

Green Space “opportunities” raised the following concerns:

- Build upon already existing gardens
- Lots of potential for money for building/maintaining green space
- Give people trees when they buy a home
- Alleys through connections with other South West communities
- Empty lots can be converted to green space, and made family-friendly
- Transform Owen Elementary property into community space
- Alleys can turn into nature walk path



# New Housing Development – SINGLE FAMILY HOMES

The second meeting held March 6, 2017 with the assistance of Congress of Communities, and LISC, documented the residents' aesthetic preferences for the redevelopment of our neighborhood. Approximately 40 people attended this meeting.

As part of the "documenting our community voice", photos showing a variety of development options were displayed in groups. Everyone placed stickers on the pictures they "liked". The results are as followed:

Single Family Homes (8 pictures, 39 likes):

## Top three (3) Single Families Homes Liked:

1. Picture # 4 – 11 likes
2. Picture # 8 – 8 likes
3. Picture # 10 – 6 likes



Picture # 4 – 11 likes



Picture # 10 – 6 likes



Picture # 1 – 3 likes



Picture # 8 – 8 likes



Picture # 13 – 5 likes

## New Housing Development – SINGLE FAMILY HOMES – continued

Single Family Homes – continued (8 pictures, 39 likes):



Picture # 22 – 3 likes

The favorites for “New Housing Development” may have been chosen because they resemble the current homes in our neighborhood.



Picture # 23 – 2 likes

# New Housing Development – MULTIFAMILY

Multiple Family Homes (5 pictures, 21 likes):



Picture # 7 – 8 likes



Picture # 16 – 4 likes



Picture # 20 – 3 likes



Picture # 9 – 7 likes



Picture # 19 – 3 likes

## Top three (3) Multifamily Homes Liked:

1. Picture # 7 – 8 likes
2. Picture # 9 – 7 likes
3. Picture # 16 – 4 likes



# New Housing Development – BLOCK LAYOUT DESIGN

Block Layout Design (7 pictures, 27 likes):



Picture # 3 – 12 likes

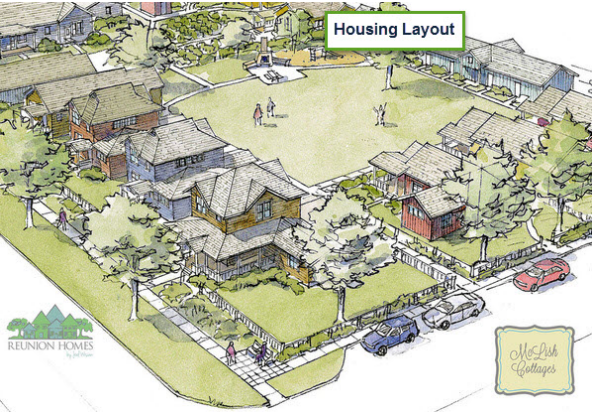
These pictures are meant to illustrate which block design residents prefer.



Picture # 14 – 5 likes



Picture # 26– 1 likes



Picture # 11 – 12 likes



Picture # 25 – 2 likes



Picture # 27 – 1 like

### Top three (3) Block Layout Design Liked:

- 1. Picture # 3 and #11 – 12 likes
- 2. Picture # 14 – 5 likes
- 3. Picture # 25 – 2 likes



Picture # 28 – 0 like

# New Housing Development – MIXED RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS



Picture # 5 – 11 likes



2121 Trumbull St

Picture # 15 – 5 likes

The favorites were chosen because its design would look better within a small neighborhood like North Corktown.



Picture # 18 – 3 likes

## Top three (3) Mixed Residential Commercial Buildings Liked:

1. Picture # 5 – 11 likes
2. Picture # 15 – 5 likes
3. Picture # 18 – 3 likes

# Green Space – LAYOUT DESIGN

Also, at second meeting held March 6, 2017, residents discussed Green Space design aesthetics, if the City requires design guidelines, and regulation of compose use.

Residents identified the following preferred Green Space aesthetics:

Green Space options (5 pictures, 49 likes):



**Picture # 1 – 17 likes**



**Picture # 2 – 13 likes**



Picture # 12 – 6 likes



**Picture # 6 – 9 likes**



Picture # 17 – 4 likes

**Top three (3) GREEN SPACE – Layout Design Liked:**

1. Picture # 1 – 17 likes
2. Picture # 2 – 13 likes
3. Picture # 6 – 9 likes

# Community Art Center

The North Corktown Community wants to support Rhonda Greene and Heritage Works in the pursuit of a North Corktown Community Art Center.

The assessment of what amenities North Corktown residents desired most for a North Corktown Community Art Center took place during several community meetings and a survey. We partnered with Rhonda Greene of Heritage Works for collection of this information. The top-rated amenities were:

- Auditorium
- Parking
- Flexible/Black Box Space
- Amphitheatre
- Commercial/Community Kitchen
- Dance/Artist Studios
- Youth Programs

2. Tech for community use to enhance media productions (e.g., music studio, video editing stations, recording equipment, Photoshop, etc.); maker space
3. Space to lease (revenue generation)
4. Dance classes
5. Food via snack or vending, mini-cafe, kitchen
6. Small and large visual arts classrooms and workshop space
7. Office space
8. Meetings, discussion, and organizing space
9. Multipurpose room
10. Gallery
11. Study room with computers and a Library
12. Lounge area
13. Therapeutic space via art
14. Public/outsider access

In addition, Heritage Works used an online survey to seek feedback from the Detroit Cultural Community, who ranked the following amenities and uses:

1. Performance theater/auditorium black/white box; indoor & outdoor



## Community Art Center – continued

The Sustainable Development Task-force held a final meeting to asset the needs that would translate in to the actual creation of a North Corktown Community Art Center.

### Location:

- A Central location
- A location on Martin Luther King street for better retail opportunities, which lead to the following concerns:
  - i. type of retail
  - ii. determine if the retail should attract the North Cork community, the outside community, or both
  - iii. retail pop-up space
- Lots own by the North Corktown Neighborhood Association (NCNA)
- It should be within walking distance for the North Corktown community (ex. 20-minute neighborhood as previously discussed at community meetings with the city's planning department)

**Structure Style** - it was agreed that a campus style structure might require more money to build and maintain. We should start with a single structure. If additional building are needed, we can add-on based on the community's needs. The Lawrence Tech Center Design was shared.

**Financing** - The money for the structure and location would be dictated by the entity the community center is govern through (e.g., 501c3, LLC). Also, layers of funding may be needed to raise the money required for the initial and future support of the Community Art Center. The Art Space project would serve as an example.

**Governing Agencies** – The following should be consider:

- Corporate sponsorship (e.g., Motor City Casino)
- Partnering with the Detroit Institute of Arts or Wayne State University
- Heritage Works is willing to be partner as they are looking for a new home

## WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS

North Corktown residents are concerned about their future. According to the North Corktown Neighborhood Association Board's Executive Committee, "We want to empower ourselves as North Corktown residents to band together, work with City Departments, other agencies, as well as philanthropy to develop a plan that balances new development and open space uses.

We want to work towards equity for those of us who have weathered the storm while also welcoming those new residents that want to join our community."

