

Future framework for Detroit’s economic growth, land use, city systems, neighborhoods and civic engagement entail brighter plans for a revival of the city

Detroit’s determination

By Dayle Maas & Brigitte Smith
MANAGING EDITOR & PHOTO EDITOR

He lived. He learned. He left.

English teacher Geoffrey Young was born and raised on the Northwest side of Detroit.

“There were pockets of people with all this diversity in the area, which kind of made for a nice community. You’d run outside and Mrs. Boik would give me stuff from her pear trees, that kind of thing,” Young said. “Over time, as the economy shifted ... as people began moving out of the city and into the suburbs, like Dearborn Heights, then the nature of the community changed.”

This change occurred all over the city.

Motown is not the same center of music, cars and city life it used to be. This is seen in abandoned buildings like the Packard Plant and Michigan Central Station, the deserted and boarded up houses, the bankruptcy the city just declared, and as Young says, the migration of residents to surrounding suburban areas.

Yet, there is a coterie of people working to reassemble the shattered pieces of Detroit’s past.

Mayor Dave Bing said in his 2013 State of the City Address, “Despite our much-publicized financial issues, there is progress to report in the City of Detroit. The picture is not all doom and gloom. Everyday there are more signs of hope and possibilities.”

“Hope and possibilities” are recognized in organizations, business owners, residents and visitors alike.

Detroit resident Toby Barlow owns two businesses in the city, Nora and Signal Return. He encourages living, working and playing in the city, and he wants to see this city thrive.

“I really want more people seeing Detroit for what it is: the center of the region,” Barlow said via email. “To me, it would be great if more people were comfortable coming downtown and to midtown to shop and look around, too.”

Barlow is used to the “city life,” as he moved to Detroit from New York seven years ago.

“It would be great to have an increase in high density neighborhoods, a real walking and bicycling culture,” Barlow said. “It’s changed so much just in (the) time I’ve been here. I’m really curious to see what the next few years bring.”

These next few years could bring the change he is hoping for. The Detroit Works Project (DWP), an organization “introduced in 2010 as a process to create a shared, achievable vision for Detroit’s future” created a framework called Detroit Future City (DFC) to “improve quality of life and fiscal sustainability for Detroit and its residents,” according to the DWP’s website.

In 2010, community meetings were held to discuss the future of Detroit.

“The community made it clear that they wanted action now,” Detroit Future City Media & PR Consultant James Canning said. “The whole goal of those meetings was to create a strategy for the entire city to try to transform it, make it better, improve the quality of life.”

That strategy turned into the Detroit Strategic Framework, a part of the Implementation Office of DFC. This Framework is “a city-wide plan that reflects three years of intensive community-driven research, collaboration, analysis and development of shared vision for the City of Detroit,” the DWP website states.

The Framework is separated into five elements: economic growth, land use, city systems, neighborhood, land and building assets and a civic engagement chapter.

Dan Pitera, the Executive Director of the civic engagement team for the DWP joined this program to “connect the work directly to Detroiters and to connect the plan in a real way.”

“We, as Detroiters, are the ones implementing,” Pitera said.

He sees this as a challenge for Detroit. Pitera believes Detroiters think their work is independent, but he wants to show them “something greater can come if they work together.”

“What Detroit Future City attempts to do is become that guidebook for everyone in our community to figure out how to make decisions about neighbor-

hoods, jobs, economic developments, how to fix our city lighting systems or other city systems, what do with vacant properties like Packard Plant, like the Train Station, things like that,” Canning said.

Social Studies teacher Terri Steimer is a supporter of the city and its redevelopment but has her concerns.

“I’d just hate to see it turn into a wasteland where we just knock all these buildings down and do nothing about it,” Steimer said.

She also says pride is a major component in getting Detroit back on its feet.

“I think that the more people work and take pride in what they do for some sense of ownership, that that increases the value,” Steimer said. “If we lived in a community where half of it’s torn down, it looks like somebody’s got bad teeth, there’s missing teeth. It’s like ‘Yeah, why should I take care of my teeth? They look like crap anyway.’ And that whole idea is, again, if you don’t have pride in where you live.”

This pride may seep into the entire metropolitan area, as DFC and its goals are pushing to make Detroit a desirable city.

“It’s really important to see that the surrounding communities benefit from there being a strong Detroit, a strong urban core,” Canning said. “And so the more we can do to improve the quality of life in Detroit and for its residents and for its businesses,

it’ll not only respect the folks that live here, it’ll make a positive impact on them, but also those that visit and having that structure of Detroit will definitely trickle out into the surrounding communities, and it’ll improve what’s in their community.”

Detroit Works Project is not the only redevelopment movement; the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, COBO Center, Hudson-Webber Foundation and organizations alike have already made substantial strides.

“My sense is that we are approaching some positive tipping points. There’s a great moment when you’re building a campfire, when you’re blowing on the coals and suddenly it just goes ‘Woof!’ and it all catches and beautifully glows,” Barlow said. “I think all the work that has been done by the foundation community, the large downtown business leaders like Dan Gilbert and GM, and the small business owners like Phil Cooley who owns Slows, Liz Blondy who owns Canine to Five and Paul Howard who owns Cliff Bell’s, will create a momentum that one day soon just goes ‘Woof!’ And then it will feel like a very different place.”

For more information go to www.detroitworksproject.com.



BRIGITTE SMITH

Technology bond to be voted on in February

By Katelyn Carney & Addison Toutant
ASSISTANT EDITOR & INTERN

It’s fifth hour, and senior Sarah Rustmann is dreading it. She knows she’ll have to face the wrath of technology again.

“With the slowness of the computers, it’s hard to finish projects and look up research faster, which means I have more work to do when I get home,” Rustmann said.

Because of the many issues that students and staff have experienced while using the system’s computers, the Grosse Pointe School Board voted at their Nov. 25 meeting to put a \$50 million technology bond on the Feb. 25 ballot. The tech bond would supply the school with newer computers and more updated software.

“I think that the tech bond is absolutely crucial. It is imperative that we pass the bond in order to move forward with 21st century teaching and learning in Grosse Pointe,” Principal Kate Murray said.

The tech bond was approved with a majority 5-1 vote. Trustee Cindy Pangborn was the only member opposed. By moving the issue from the voting period in November to the current voting period, the board is spending additional money on the election.

“I object to spending \$60,000.00 on an election when, if done on schedule, has no cost,” Pangborn said in an email. “I object to a February election when this community historically has been vocal against these special elections. Most of all, I think it is wrong to hold hostage our voters with an all-or-nothing proposal.”

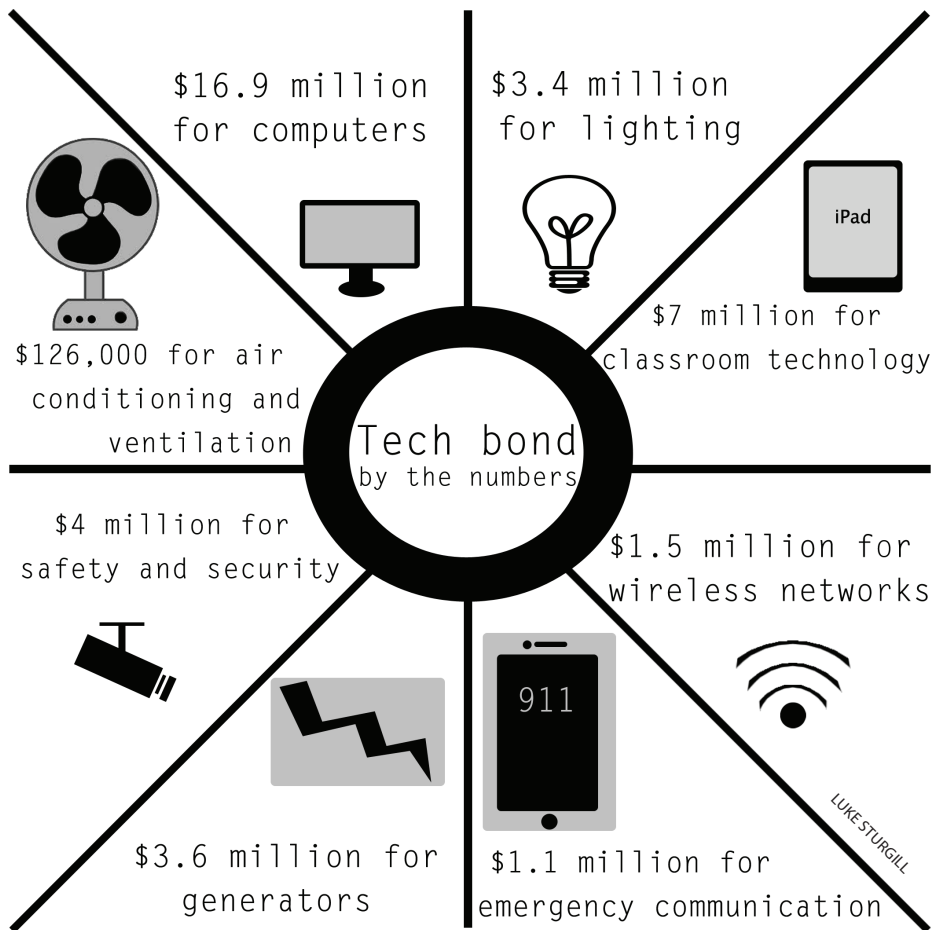
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WINTER BREAK
Begins Friday, Dec. 20 at 3:05 p.m.
School resumes Monday, Jan. 6 at 8 a.m.

NWEA WINTER TESTING BEGINS
Monday, Jan. 6 at 8 a.m.

8TH GRADE ORIENTATION
Wednesday, Jan. 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the PAC

BAND & ORCHESTRA CONCERT
Thursday, Jan. 16 at 7:30 p.m. in the gym



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