

DETROIT DECLARATION

GUIDE TO ENGAGEMENT

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Detroit, Michigan USA

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THE DETROIT DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

Cities are the greatest expression of civilization. Great cities are filled with people who exercise their talent and creativity as the catalytic risk-takers, doers, and leaders who forge the dynamic marketplace of ideas that grow places into prosperity. We are the people who believe in cities and pledge to align our energies for the benefit of Michigan's largest and most storied city, Detroit.

Detroit's place in history is secure no doubt. But if Detroit is to have any chance at a prosperous future, we must act boldly and swiftly to address the structural deficiencies that have acted over the decades to conspire against our central premise. Because in the greatest irony of Detroit's astounding story over the last hundred years, we acknowledge that our greatest single mistake has been to disinvest in our core asset, the very city itself.

To return to prosperity we must seize this unprecedented opportunity to remake ourselves and our city in a fundamental way. We must have the vision to not only honor Detroit on its own terms today, but work towards what Detroit can become tomorrow. We must recognize that Detroit and its surrounding communities need each other and share a common destiny. We must value and empower those who imagine a city of more rather than a city of less, even while embracing the idea that we may need to become leaner to ensure that the city thrives, not just survives.

This vision of a greater, healthier, more vibrant, urban and livable Detroit is our single purpose, our manifest object and basis for this transformative moment. For Michigan to have a prosperous future, Detroit must be at the center of it.

PRINCIPLES

Building on Detroit's assets to create opportunity and options for a prosperous city and people:

- ***Be welcoming and embrace our diversity.*** Move beyond mere tolerance of our differences to a true commitment to openness, understanding and cooperation, and the inclusion of multiple perspectives both in our neighborhoods and at the highest decision-making realms.
- ***Preserve our authenticity.*** Celebrate and elevate that which makes Detroit unique—local art, music, food, design, architecture, culture—to build a stronger local economy.



- ***Cultivate creativity.*** Build an infrastructure to foster and promote emerging talent in one of Detroit's greatest strengths, the arts: music, film, visual arts, design, and other creative industries.
- ***Diversify our economy.*** Create a culture of opportunity and risk-taking, especially by investing in entrepreneurialism and small, micro-business.
- ***Promote sustainability.*** Embrace the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental benefit by retooling our infrastructure with green technology, adapting vacant buildings and open spaces for new uses, and creating healthy, family-supporting jobs.
- ***Enhance quality of place.*** Create a comprehensive vision for transit-linked, high-quality, walkable urban centers in Detroit.
- ***Demand transportation alternatives.*** Invest in an integrated regional transportation system that links communities and provides citizens with access to the jobs, health care, and education they need.
- ***Prioritize education, pre-K through 12 and beyond.*** Create a culture that values the wide, equitable educational attainment necessary to produce both economic opportunity and stronger citizens.
- ***Elevate our universities and research institutions.*** Create world-class education, new technology, and medical centers to attract and retain students and faculty from around the world.
- ***Enhance the value of city living.*** Demand public safety and services to improve the quality of life for residents.
- ***Demand government accountability.*** Reward civic engagement with responsive, transparent, and ethical governmental decision-making.
- ***Think regionally and leverage our geography.*** Maximize our position as an international border city and a Midwestern hub between Chicago and Toronto. Forge meaningful partnerships between Detroit and its suburbs to compete globally in the 21st century.



ABOUT THE DECLARATION

What is the Detroit Declaration?

The [Detroit Declaration](#) is an organizing document for people who love Detroit, who sense that there is a growing tide of consensus about what our city must do differently to thrive, and who are willing to invest time and energy into the political process to see that consensus emerge on a transformative scale. This document is the starting point for an attempt to organize a constituency that we believe already exists. It simply lacks a name, a list, and a single purpose.

What is the purpose?

This is a movement to elect leadership who will be our allies in a new vision for Detroit and to hold them accountable for upholding the principles outlined in the Declaration.

Who can sign the Declaration?

Anyone who loves Detroit and cares about its future is welcome to sign the Declaration. But words alone won't move us forward — we need ACTION. By signing the Declaration, you are making a personal commitment to promote these principles in your daily life and work. Furthermore, you are agreeing to help elect leaders who support them and advocate for policies that uphold them.

How can I sign?

The Declaration can be signed online at <http://DetroitDeclaration.com>. When you sign, your email address will be added to a mailing list for periodic updates and opportunities to get involved. If you do not have internet access, hard copy pledge forms are available.

Who is behind this?

The Declaration was drafted by a diverse coalition of twenty individuals who share a common vision for the city's future: Austin Black II, Nichole Christian, Matt Clayson, Kim Clayson, Emily Doerr, Brian Ellison, Khalilah Burt Gaston, Shannon Gaston, Neil Greenberg, Francis Grunow, Ponsella Hardaway, Ritchie Harrison, Eddie Lee, Sean Mann, Kirk Mayes, Claire Nelson, Sarah Szurpicki, Steve Tobocman, Kirsten Ussery, Sandra Yu.

How can I get more information?

Please join our Facebook page at <http://Facebook.com/DeclareDetroit> for updates & events. For media inquiries, contact declaredetroit@gmail.com. Please note that this is a volunteer-driven grassroots movement with no staff, office or budget. We will do our best to respond as quickly as possible.



THREE AVENUES OF ENGAGEMENT

Anyone can be an advocate for the Declaration in his/her daily life through three avenues:

1) Electing Political Leaders:

Mobilizing support for candidates and helping to elect officials who value the Principles of the Detroit Declaration. The Detroit Declaration envisions a new spirit of political engagement and mobilization in which signers are motivated to run for office and/or to engage in campaigns to help elect those who will value and make policy changes consistent with the principles. The engagement of DD, its signers, and the movement is intended to be transform politics in a manner consistent with the principles, but also to make the DD a powerful and effective political force that creates the change necessary to give life to our vision.

What the Detroit Declaration will do help elect political leaders:

The Detroit Declaration intends on transforming local politics by engaging in campaigns of political leaders, such that our participation is a decisive factor in their elections. We intend to mobilize those who share our principles and vision around candidates who emerge from our movement, as well as around those whose own values and vision align with the Declaration. Our support will include volunteering on their campaigns, helping to shape and inform their policy positions, and bringing the technical expertise and creative resources of the movement to their elections.

What YOU can do:

- Help the Detroit Declaration identify candidates who support our principles and will be champions of our movement.
- Learn the political skills that win elections.
- Volunteer for candidates who support the Detroit Declaration by walking door-to-door and talking to voters, calling voters on the phone, and engaging in other campaign activities that both are effective and proven techniques, but also that facilitate a more honest and direct dialogue between candidates and the community during the election process.
- Become a donor to candidates who support the Detroit Declaration, so that these candidates begin to see the power and depth of support from embracing the Declaration's principles and values.



2) **Advocating for important issues:**

Tracking the progress of important issues relevant to the Detroit Declaration and working to hold decision makers, both elected officials and civic leaders, accountable for advancing policies that align with these principles.

What the Detroit Declaration will do to advocate for important issues:

The Detroit Declaration intends to facilitate communication between elected officials and the signers such that elected officials are held to account and can draw upon the resources and support from the signers on initiatives and issues that actualize the Declaration's principles and vision for the region. We will hold an open annual policy meeting to discuss progress over past year on chosen issues and determine advocacy agenda for following year. We will write policy recommendations for chosen principles. We will offer training on how to get involved in advocacy. And we will provide a list of organizations involved in the policy issues.

What YOU can do:

- Take part in the advocacy training.
- Volunteer with or otherwise get involved with advocacy organizations.
- Communicate your support of the Declaration's principles and policy proposals.

3) **Leveraging personal action:**

Using your time, talents and resources to support efforts that promote the principles of the Detroit Declaration in your neighborhood, community and city.

What the Detroit Declaration will do to support personal action:

The Detroit Declaration will provide an online mechanism for sharing your personal commitments, challenging fellow signers, and keeping each other accountable. We will organize open meetings to share, discuss and celebrate personal commitments in person. We will help set deadlines, email reminders and celebrate successes on the website, Facebook page, and email.

What YOU can do:

- Make personal commitments to take actions that promote the principles. For example, commit to riding the bus twice a week, or volunteer with the DPS Reading Corps.
- Use the Declaration community to share, discuss and celebrate your personal actions to promote the principles.



DECISION-MAKING

The Detroit Declaration was drafted by a group of individuals committed to remaking a brighter future for Detroit. Individuals who felt they could do a decent job of representing different perspectives about what our region needs to move forward—but who also acknowledge that this movement will be its most powerful if anyone who wants to be a part of its steering is empowered to do so.

There is no official leader of this movement and there are no limits on who can participate. You could be 16 or 65, live in Detroit or one of its suburbs. You could be born in the United States or born in another country; you could identify as a Democrat, a Republican or as an Independent. What matters is that you agree that the Detroit Declaration can serve as a guide to re-thinking Detroit's future.

Individuals who are a part of the decision-making body must be willing to commit several hours each month to participate in meetings or other activities related to the Detroit Declaration. The entire decision-making group meets 1-2 times per month, but individuals are most active by volunteering on a particular committee.

If you may want to join the decision-making body, we are thrilled. Here are the steps for becoming a part of the decision-making team.

- **Familiarize yourself with every written document Declare Detroit has produced.** This includes the Declaration, our definition of prosperity, our code of conduct, and our policy papers (all are available online). Not all of us can be policy experts, but we at least have to develop a general understanding of the suggestions we've made.
- **Decide that you believe in the values and principles articulated in the Detroit Declaration.** This Declaration is the glue that holds us together. We may not all agree about public policies or political candidates, but in order to participate, we must agree that the Declaration guides our discourse and decisions.
- **Contact one of the original drafters of the Declaration and say that you want to get involved.** Before participating in the decision-making body, you must go through an informal orientation. You may have lots of questions about the documents we've produced, how we operate, or other basic information, but we do not use our meetings to answer these questions. That has to happen separately before you attend. If you don't know one of the drafters, email declaredetroit@gmail.com and we will schedule a meeting.



- **Join a committee.** At your orientation session, the projects currently underway will be explained and you can determine which committee interests you the most. You'll be put in touch with the committee members and immediately looped in to whatever they're working on, and asked to contribute. No one is allowed to participate in decision-making until they've committed some time and thought to the effort. Committees tend to be in touch with each other, and usually meet or work on a written product or activity, once a week. The commitment here is probably 1-3 hours per week.

(Over time, we don't all expect each other to sustain this commitment every single week—our activity ebbs and flows. But at the beginning of involvement, it's an important demonstration of intent.)

- **Bones Committee:** This committee is responsible for working on the deliverables that help guide the internal workings and organizational development of Declare Detroit.
- **Policy Committee:** Whether you consider yourself a policy expert or would like to learn how to advocate for policies that support the Detroit Declaration, this committee is for you. Responsibilities include helping to identify the incremental steps that will help make the Principles of the Declaration a reality.
- **Candidate Outreach and Mobilization Committee:** This committee is comprised of individuals whose primary task is to determine the process for vetting potential candidates for Declare Detroit to help support in their quest for public office.
- **Public Outreach and Events:** Public engagement is central to the Detroit Declaration. The aim of this committee is to develop working relationships and partnerships with diverse groups of stakeholders for a variety of purposes, including sharing information regarding our advocacy work, planning events to promote the movement, and speaking to community groups about the Declaration.
- **Communications:** This committee coordinates all Declare Detroit branding efforts, coordinates responses to all media inquiries, and helps craft our correspondence to elected officials.



CODE OF CONDUCT

While a code of conduct might seem contrary to an inclusive, non-bureaucratic organization, our commitment to consensus-building is based on building openness and trust within the decision-making group.

When we make decisions, we talk until we come to agreement; we don't vote. It would be impossible for us to welcome new members into this body without developing a relationship built on trust and transparency. Therefore, an inclusive, non-bureaucratic movement, like the Detroit Declaration, needs to articulate norms and expectations that help guide how we interact with one another and with the general public.

Putting the Detroit Declaration into Action:

Participation and involvement in the decision-making group of the Detroit Declaration also means committing to the following set of ideas and acting in a manner that corresponds.

- **Consensus:** Declare Detroit is committed to making decisions in a cooperative manner that does not overlook the objections of a few in order to support the opinions of the majority. Through discussion and compromise, if needed, we commit to make decisions that won't make people compromise their individual beliefs or keep them up at night.
- **Inclusion:** Declare Detroit is committed to advocating for the Principles of the Detroit Declaration in a manner that is deliberately accessible, inclusive and available to people of diverse races, religions, cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations and socio-economic status.
- **Prosperity:** The premise of Detroit Declaration is that as individuals we could mobilize and "build on Detroit's assets to create opportunity and options for a prosperous city and people." Some people have asked how the Detroit Declaration defines prosperity and we want to be clear that prosperity is not limited to the attraction of a younger, highly educated middle class. Prosperity includes more than economics. True prosperity means cultivating local talent, not just attracting new talent. It means improving the condition of the relationships between the suburbs and the city and those between the public and private sector. Prosperity means taking steps now to ensure that locals both have a role in creating as well as get to share in enjoying a city that flourishes economically, socially and environmentally.



- **Respect:** To ensure that support of the Detroit Declaration is as broad and far-reaching as possible, we will reach out to a range of people with a range of views, experiences and expectations. It is vitally important to live out the Declaration by extending and demonstrating respect for others in all communications and interactions. This can mean providing opportunities for others to speak and for you to listen, allowing others to speak without interrupting or conceding that someone might know more about Detroit than you do.
- **Responsibility:** If you can't participate, you assume the responsibility for catching up or you sacrifice your right to whine about the outcome of a certain decision. However, the decision-making group will notify you of major "red flag" decisions that you may want to chime in on.
- **Participation:** Everyone must commit to sharing their perspective, especially if it is divergent from the group. We won't assume that silence equals agreement. For the shy types, this means you have to find some way to express affirmation or dissent.