

## Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

**Project Name:** *Development of an Office of Sustainability for Detroit*

- **Year Complete:** 2018
- **Local Government:** City of Detroit, MI
- **Local Foundation:** Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, Detroit Economic Growth Association

### **Project Purpose**

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To develop a citywide Sustainability Office and eventually to create a sustainability plan for the City of Detroit.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

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*Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.*

- Work through trusted partners – nonprofits, faith, and other local groups often have more purchase with residents and can help overcome mistrust in government
- Develop “boots on the ground” – the ambassador program was an amazing and cost effective way of getting tendrils out into the community to better understand the concerns of local neighbors.
- Address digital divide – many Detroit citizens don’t have access to the internet consistently, so paper surveys and other old school tech were used to reach them. The paper surveys that ambassadors helped collect were much more representative of the local population than the digital outreach efforts.
- Collect demographics – difficult to collect but necessary for an accurate representation of who is being served.
- Take time to develop trust – Build in time to develop trusting relationships with individuals and organizations...this will carry the work forward most effectively.

*Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).*

A solid personal relationship already existed which helped to smooth the transition to becoming a funding partner. However, diligence in keeping the funding partner in the loop when changes are necessary is essential, and will improve the relationship even more.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

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The City of Detroit actively [engaged](#) the community in developing their action plan. The Detroit Action Agenda is expected to launch in Spring 2019. A timeline of the rollout can be found [here](#).