



Detroit Fifth-Grader's Winning Float Design Debuts in America's Thanksgiving Parade

City.Life.Style. B1



Michigan Chronicle

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COMMENTARY

This Thanksgiving, Michigan is Lowering the Cost of Prescription Drugs

By Gov. Gretchen Whitmer
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

November is National Diabetes Month. Across our country, more than 38.4 million Americans, including almost a million Michiganders, struggle with diagnosed diabetes. They will sit down for Thanksgiving feasts this year with family and friends while managing a chronic, often expensive illness. That's why as governor, I've been working with Republicans and Democrats to lower the cost of medication and expand pharmaceutical oversight to ensure that every Michigander can afford to take care of themselves.

We know that diabetes is more prevalent among the Black community, with 12% of Black adults diagnosed with diabetes compared to just 7% of white adults. And as we all know, diabetes is expensive: according to the American Diabetes Association, in 2022, Americans spent \$412.9 billion on health care related to treating diabetes. For so many Michiganders, diabetes it is more than just a health concern; it's a monthly bill that drains your bank account. No Michigander should have to make an impossible decision between paying for medication or putting food on the table and a roof over their head.



That's why we have been working hard to lower the cost of insulin and prescription drugs to save Michiganders money. I supported Attorney General Dana Nessel's work to hold drug companies accountable for skyrocketing insulin prices. And I was grateful to President Biden for signing the Inflation Reduction Act, which capped the cost of insulin at \$35 a month for the 122,000 Michiganders on Medicare who use insulin. As a direct result of this cap, most major insulin manufacturers followed suit, lowering their own prices to \$35. Our strategy to lower costs is paying off.

In 2022, I signed bipartisan legislation that regulates pharmacy benefit managers, or PBMs, and brings more transparency to our healthcare system. It prohibits PBMs from charging patients a higher co-pay than what the drug sells for, ensuring that pharmacies communicate openly with patients about all their options and keeping drug prices low.

I also signed bills protecting Michiganders against surprise medical billing and fostering more competitive health care pricing. Until late last year, when we signed a bill repealing it, Michigan was the only state in the nation that had an immunity shield for drug manufacturers—preventing residents, local, and state governments from suing pharmaceutical companies and distributors for injuries caused by their products.

Let's keep working together to lower prescription drug costs, boost access to affordable health care, and ensure every Michigander can focus on what really matters this holiday season: giving thanks for our health, our loved ones, and the food on our tables.



Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist II

REVIVING LEGACY:

How Detroit's Historic Higginbotham School Becomes a Beacon of Affordable Housing

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Detroit's Eight-Mile-Wyoming neighborhood witnessed a powerful moment on November 19, 2024, as the historic William E. Higginbotham School began its transformation into the Higginbotham Art Residences. This monumental project will provide 100 affordable housing units while preserving a significant cultural landmark that has long embodied resilience and solidarity in Detroit's Black community.

Constructed in 1926, the Higginbotham School once served as an all-Black elementary school during a time of segregated housing practices, offering both education and a sanctuary for Black families navigating systemic barriers. Its conversion into affordable housing underscores a collective effort to honor history while addressing the ongoing housing crisis. Supported by Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) funding, and City of Detroit ARPA funds, the \$35.9 million project reflects the community's resilience and creativity.

Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist II stood among community members to celebrate this pivotal step forward.

"Governor Whitmer and I are committed to growing access to affordable housing in every community, including right here in Detroit," he said. "I am excited to be here at the groundbreaking for the Higginbotham School, which will begin new life as 100 units of affordable housing 100 years after it was built. The state of Michigan was proud to provide critical support getting this project across the finish line. Since taking office, we have invested double what we did in the previous eight years to build or rehabilitate 34,000 housing units, and we will keep standing tall for affordable housing across Michigan."

The redevelopment is being led by URGE Development Group in partnership with Cinnaire, MSHDA, and the City of Detroit. It will not only provide housing for households earning between 30% and 80% of the Area Median Income but will also incorporate community spaces that honor Detroit's cultural heritage. For Roderick Hardamon, CEO of URGE Development Group, the project is about creating something meaningful for the neighborhood.

"The Higginbotham Art Residences is a love letter to the neighborhoods of Detroit. We are creating an example of what can be done to breathe new life into our vacated school buildings. By weaving affordable housing into a campus immersed in art (both inside and outside of the building), we are showing a future of what neighborhood-centric development can look like. We are excited for the support of each of our partners for this transformative project," Hardamon added.

The residences will feature spaces for nonprofit and community organizations while showcasing artwork from local Detroit artists. An outdoor sculpture garden and installations throughout the development will blend art and community, creating a vibrant environment where culture and daily life intersect.

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan highlighted the critical role of affordable housing in strengthening the community. "Today's groundbreaking is about more than a building; it's about creating a future that respects our past and supports our neighbors. The Higginbotham Art Residences will provide quality, affordable housing that meets the needs of Detroit's residents and fosters community pride."

Councilmember Angela Whitfield Calloway echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of investing in neighborhoods to sustain the people who call them home. "I firmly believe that investing in our neighborhoods is the key to uplifting our entire city. By focusing on development where people have lived and worked, we ensure that residents can remain in the neighborhoods they love. The Higginbotham Art Residences not only contribute to the revitalization of this area but also address the urgent need for safe, affordable housing."

The transformation of the historic William E. Higginbotham School into the Higginbotham Art Residences is a profound nod to the enduring resilience and creativity of Detroit's Black community. Once a sanctuary of education and empowerment for Black children during an era of segregation and systemic barriers, this space is now being reimaged to continue its legacy of service to the community. By converting this all-Black school into affordable housing and a cultural hub, the project ensures that the building's historic significance is not only preserved but expanded. It is a record

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Motor City Match Winner Transforms Detroit Healthcare with 1st Step Healthcare Training
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Highland Park City Council Approves Plans for New Water Meters: What Residents Need to Know

By Amber Ogden
STAFF WRITER

Highland Park City Council unanimously approved a major plan on Monday night to replace the city's aging water meters with advanced digital models. This move promises to improve billing accuracy, increase efficiency, and empower residents with real-time water usage data. The council's approval covers three critical resolutions outlining the project's logistics, funding strategies, and a comprehensive community outreach effort.

The current water meters in Highland Park have been in place for decades, with many reaching the end of their expected lifespan. Outdated technology has led to inaccurate readings and inefficiencies in the billing process. In response to these challenges, city officials began exploring the need for an overhaul nearly ten years ago. Monday's vote marks a crucial step forward in addressing these issues.

Councilman Khursheed Ash-Shafii asked Damon L. Garrett, Director of the Highland Park Water Department, questions concerning the process, as residents have been highly concerned



Image courtesy of City of Highland Park

about whether the master water meters will actually take place.

In October 2023, Highland Park and the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) settled and moved toward a renewed partnership, and a proposed settlement introduced three key pillars to resolve longstanding disputes. The settlement outlines payment assurances from Highland Park, state-funded investments in critical capital improvements for both systems, and the installation of new metering technology to ensure fair billing and build trust in the regional water system.

City officials emphasized the benefits of the new technology, noting that installing modern meters will allow for the real-time monitoring of water consumption. This feature will not only help residents manage their water usage more effectively but will also assist the city in promptly identifying and addressing leaks or other system issues.

Garrett ensured that residents would be comfortable with the construction and the resolution of the new meter placement for Highland Park residents moving forward.

During the meeting, council members discussed the logistics and timeline for rolling out the new meters. They assured residents that there would be minimal disruption during the installation process. Additionally, information sessions are planned to help residents understand how the new meters work and what they can expect.

The city council's decision marks a significant milestone in Highland Park's infrastructure improvement efforts. As the project progresses, scheduling and installation updates will be provided to keep the community informed.

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Higginbotham Art Residences

From page A-1

lamation of a place that once symbolized opportunity and belonging, and now is being reimagined to address critical housing needs while celebrating the artistry and strength of Detroiters.

This redevelopment holds the unique power to serve the community in ways that echo its original purpose. Where students once learned and built futures within its walls, families will now find stability, and neighbors will gather in spaces designed for connection and support. The integration of art created by Detroit artists into the fabric of the Higginbotham Art Residences ensures that this space remains a beacon of cultural pride and self-determination. Just as the school once stood as a cornerstone for growth and possibility, the residences will anchor a new chapter of empowerment rooted in the same spirit of community

care and progress.

For residents like Teresa Moon, President of the 8 Mile/Birwood Emerge Neighborhood and a Higginbotham alumna, the redevelopment carries personal significance. Reflecting on her years at the school, she shared, “I learned a lot here. This is where I developed into the person I am today. Now, Mr. Rod Hardamon came into our community and talked to us honestly about what he was going to do with this school. I’m just overjoyed.”

Amy Hovey, MSHDA Chief Executive Officer, and Executive Director highlighted the role of partnerships in making the project possible. “MSHDA is proud to support this project with more than \$24 million in financial resources, a commitment that reflects our dedication to creating safe, affordable housing for Michigan residents. By partnering on restoration of this cultural landmark, we’re

not only expanding access to quality housing but also strengthening communities and providing a foundation for Detroiters to thrive. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this project will have for years to come.”

The development team and supporters emphasized that this project is not just about housing; it’s about creating a space that uplifts the entire community. “This effort is a testament to the power of partnerships. Through collective commitment, we’re turning the vision of affordable housing and community enrichment into reality at Higginbotham, contributing to a stronger, more inclusive Detroit,” said Sherita Smith, Senior Vice President of Cinnaire Community Connection.

Funding for the Higginbotham Art Residences includes \$14.1 million in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, \$2.7 million in Historic Tax Credits, a \$4.6 million MSHDA First

Mortgage, \$5.9 million in MSHDA CERA funding, and \$8.4 million in City of Detroit ARPA funds. These investments represent a shared commitment to creating a future that addresses the challenges of today while honoring the legacy of the past.

The Higginbotham Art Residences serve as a blueprint for how we can honor the past while shaping a future rooted in equity and creativity. This project is more than construction; it’s a powerful reminder of what is possible when communities take the lead in reclaiming their history and building spaces that reflect their needs and dreams. By weaving together art, affordable housing, and cultural preservation, the Higginbotham Art Residences offer a vision of a Detroit where history fuels progress and where neighborhoods thrive through intentional investment. It leaves us with a question: if this is what we can do here, what’s next for our city’s untapped potential?

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WEEK'S
BEST
LOTTERY

PICKS

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653	114	205	534	716
320	950	1751	8789	
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New Water Meters

From page A-1

Council Member Kallela Martin expressed her concerns regarding the potential impact on residents’ and what it means for water bills once the new water meters are installed. Martin sought assurance that residents would not face unexpected increases in their water costs as a result of the Water Master Meter Project installations. “It means that for the first time since 2012, when the plant shutdown, we will actually be able to measure the water accurately,” Garrett said.

The first resolution formalizes the agreement between Highland Park and a selected vendor responsible for the manufacturing and installation of the new meters. The city worked with a team of consultants to vet several potential contractors, prioritizing those with proven experience in implementing large-scale municipal metering projects. The chosen vendor has a track record of successful installations in cities across the state, which contributed to their selection.

The second resolution addresses the project’s funding. The total cost of the meter replacement program is estimated at \$8 million. While some of this amount will come from the city’s water enterprise fund, officials also plan to pursue state and federal grants to offset expenses. If grant funding falls short, Highland Park may consider issuing municipal bonds, though the council emphasized that they will explore every available avenue to minimize the financial impact on residents.

The third resolution focuses on community outreach and education. City officials will roll out a public information campaign to explain the purpose and benefits of the new meters. Residents will receive updates via mailers, social media, and community meetings.

Despite the advantages, some residents have

expressed concerns about data privacy and the potential for higher bills. Highland Park officials have addressed these worries by assuring that stringent data protection protocols will be in place and emphasizing that any bill increase will be due to more accurate readings rather than rate hikes.

During Monday’s meeting, the council opened the floor to public comments. Several residents voiced questions about the project, asking whether the city had conducted a comprehensive environmental impact assessment, to which city engineers replied that switching to the new meter technology is expected to reduce the city’s carbon footprint by eliminating the need for regular truck-based meter readings.

Others inquired about the reliability of the new meters, citing concerns about potential malfunctions. City officials reassured residents that the selected technology has been tested extensively, with less than 0.1% failure rates reported in comparable municipalities.

To facilitate a smooth transition, Highland Park will set up a helpline to address resident concerns once installation begins. Additionally, city staff plans to monitor the implementation process closely to ensure the project stays on track. With the council’s approval secured, Highland Park is set to begin the installation phase in early 2025. The entire project is expected to take about 18 months to complete, with priority given to neighborhoods that have reported the highest incidences of meter inaccuracies.

As Highland Park embarks on this ambitious infrastructure upgrade, city officials remain committed to transparency and collaboration, ensuring that the transition is as seamless as possible. Residents are encouraged to stay informed and participate in upcoming public forums, city council meetings, and workshops.

National Youth H.O.P.E. Month Highlights Urgent Need for Housing Security

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

For many young people, being unhoused means facing a reality marked by constant instability, vulnerability, and limited options. Without a safe place to sleep, they move from couch to couch, sometimes relying on friends or distant relatives, and often face nights spent in shelters, on the street, or in other temporary spaces. This lack of stable housing disrupts every aspect of their lives—from education to health and well-being—creating obstacles that make it challenging to envision or build a future. Young people without housing also lack access to the stability and resources many of their peers take for granted, leaving them at a higher risk for exploitation, violence, and mental health challenges.

Living unhoused as a youth isn’t just about the absence of a physical space; it’s the absence of safety, dignity, and a sense of belonging. Homelessness forces young people into survival mode, making it difficult to focus on education or employment when basic needs like food, hygiene, and safety are uncertain. Many experience a profound sense of isolation, feeling unseen by a society that often overlooks their struggles. As a result, youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to face mental health crises, suffer from trauma, and develop a distrust of institutions, reinforcing the cycle of marginalization and making it harder to break free from housing insecurity.

Detroit Phoenix Center (DPC) is gearing up for an impactful National Youth H.O.P.E. (Homelessness Outreach, Prevention, and Education) Month this November, a time dedicated to raising awareness and support for Detroit’s young people facing housing insecurity. At the heart of the month’s initiatives is “One Night Without a Bed”



ONWAB Impact Dinner & Youth Kickback – November 29

As the culminating event of the month, ONWAB invites Detroiters to spend a night in solidarity with youth who face housing instability. The evening, held at Morena’s Event Venue in Redford Charter Township, will feature youth-led discussions, educational activities, and an awards ceremony honoring advocates for youth. Sponsored by organizations such as Ally, Brasscraft, and IFF, the event is free for youth ages 14-24, with WDIV-TV’s Tati Amare as the emcee.

(ONWAB), scheduled for November 29, a solidarity event that underscores the reality of youth homelessness while encouraging Detroiters to take action in support of housing security for all youth.

Courtney Smith, CEO of Detroit Phoenix Center, shared her vision for the month’s activities, highlighting the importance of community support for Detroit’s youth. “This month, we’re envisioning a future where every young person in Detroit has a safe, warm bed. It’s about more than awareness; it’s about investing in our city’s future by standing with our youth,” Smith explains. This message of solidarity drives DPC’s mission throughout November, inviting Detroit residents to join efforts that emphasize youth safety, dignity, and empowerment.

A Call to Action for Detroit

Detroit Phoenix Center

is calling on the community to participate, sponsor, or donate in support of ONWAB and other initiatives this month. All contributions directly fund DPC programs, providing essential resources, support, and advocacy for Detroit’s youth. National Youth H.O.P.E. Month marks DPC’s largest fundraising effort each year, essential for sustaining programs that aid youth experiencing housing instability, poverty, and other barriers.

“This month, we want to make sure our city stands with our youth, not just during H.O.P.E. Month but year-round,” Smith states. “Together, we can create a future where every young person has the resources to thrive.”

For tickets, sponsorship details, or to donate, visit www.detroitphoenix-center.org or the ONWAB event page at www.onenightwithoutabed.com.

Detroit Phoenix Center’s National Youth H.O.P.E. Month events are about building community and resilience, ensuring that each young person in Detroit feels seen, supported, and empowered.

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DTE Energy emPOWERing the Community



Don't fall victim to scammers this holiday season

DTE Energy shares the red flags of scammers to keep you safe

Scammers constantly change the ways they impersonate companies like DTE and try to trick you, often by threatening to cut off your service within hours or even minutes. This can scare many people into giving large sums of money or sharing sensitive personal information. Unfortunately, scam attempts seem to increase around the holiday season.

Trust your gut — if you are unsure of a potential DTE representative at your door or over the phone, call DTE at 800-477-4747. If payment is required on your account or work is needed at your home, DTE's customer service team will be able to confirm and put you at ease.

At Your Door

- Before routine visits to your home, DTE will try to contact you in advance through mail, door hangers, phone calls, texts or emails. Sometimes crews may show up before DTE has had a chance to notify you ahead of time.
- DTE wants you to feel safe when a representative or any utility worker visits your home. Prior to allowing a person claiming to work for DTE in your home or on your property, keep the following things in mind:
 - Know your electric and natural gas provider. Just because DTE supplies your electricity, it does not mean they supply your gas, and vice versa. (In the city of Detroit, DTE does provide both electricity and natural gas.)
 - All DTE Electric and Gas employees, and most of their contractors, carry identification badges and are required to show their badges when asked.
 - If an employee or contractor won't present their badge or doesn't have one, you should deny entry into your home and call 800-477-4747 to verify whether DTE is scheduled to be there. Keep your door locked while you make the call, and speak through the locked door if you need to talk to the person.
 - If the person becomes agitated or acts strangely, call 911.
- DTE will never collect payment at your home.

Online

- Scammers use email, text messages and social media sites, such as Facebook and X, to contact you. Some scammers are even placing sponsored ads in search engine listings when customers are searching for DTE's website or looking to start service or pay their bill.
- Never give out account information, personal information, bank accounts or credit card numbers online or to someone you do not know.
- Never click on a link or scan a barcode or QR code from a contact or website you are unsure of.

Phone Calls

- Scammers often use caller ID spoofing to make a call appear to originate from DTE. They'll also impose unrealistic deadlines for payment or threaten to disconnect power within a period of hours to scare customers.
- Scammers will often request unusual payment methods, such as money-transferring apps, prepaid debit or gift cards, Bitcoin, or Western Union wire transfers.
- Confirm you're speaking with DTE by asking the person to provide your account number or amount of your latest bill.

Scan our QR code below to learn more about the red flags of DTE impersonators.



If your property has an indoor natural gas meter, the state requires a safety inspection every three years. DTE will contact you to schedule this appointment. A technician from DTE or approved vendor, RECONN, needs access indoors for 15 minutes to conduct the safety inspection. Learn more at dteenergy.com/gassafety.

Carbon Monoxide Awareness Month

Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas that is very hazardous. Installing carbon monoxide detectors on a wall or ceiling near all sleeping areas is one of the best defenses against Carbon monoxide poisoning in your home. (For businesses, carbon monoxide detectors in main areas away from vents and appliances or equipment that produce more or steam are beneficial.)

Other tips for protecting against carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- Make sure natural gas appliances are properly installed, vented and maintained.
- Hire a maintenance professional to check your furnace and other fuel-burning appliances annually.
- Schedule an annual inspection of your flues vents and chimneys to ensure they are clear of debris and in proper working condition.
- Keep the area around your heating equipment clean and unblocked to allow proper airflow.
- Shut and secure furnace compartment doors.

For more information on carbon monoxide safety, visit dteenergy.com/co.



Stay warm and cozy with these winter energy tips as temperatures fall

Forecasts for the coming winter suggest temperatures may not dip as low as in recent years in Detroit, but energy use is still expected to increase as it does each winter. Therefore, DTE Energy is sharing tips on managing use and getting assistance if you're having trouble paying bills.

While DTE works throughout the year to keep energy affordable — buying natural gas in advance of when it's needed, often when costs are lower — you can take simple steps now to make bills even more manageable this winter. For instance, you can:

- Set your thermostat to 68 degrees during the day and lower it a few degrees at night while sleeping. You can save about 3% on heating costs for each degree you lower their thermostat.
- Seal air leaks around doors and windows to prevent drafts and energy loss, which can save up to 10% on annual energy costs.
- Open the blinds or drapes to let the sun in, and close them at night to hold heat in.
- Find additional tips for winter savings at dteenergy.com/staywarm.

Energy efficiency tips can help keep energy bills affordable, but DTE understands some households experiencing financial challenges may need extra assistance for the energy they need during a cold winter. The company offers this important advice if you need help:

- Reach out to DTE at 800-477-4747 as soon as you know you may have trouble paying an upcoming bill. The sooner you reach out, the better DTE can connect you to help.



- You may be eligible for protection from service interruptions based on income and other factors. Explore these options at dteenergy.com/help.
- Access additional support with energy, food, shelter and other necessities. A call to 211 can connect those in need to agencies offering further assistance.

"Making sure our customers have the safe, reliable and affordable energy they need this winter is our top priority," said Bob Richard, president and COO, DTE Gas. "Our customers pay what we pay for natural gas, since we do not mark up the cost, and we're committed to helping them further energy efficiency programs and financial assistance if needed. We want to help keep our customers warm and safe throughout the winter and year-round."

Blight to beauty: Detroit Tree Equity Partnership plants 25,000 trees in 2 years

Two years may not seem like much but, for the Detroit Tree Equity Partnership (DTEP) it was enough time to make a big difference in Detroit neighborhoods. DTEP, which launched in October 2022, marked 25,000 trees planted in targeted areas of the city on Monday, Oct. 28, a milestone in the partnership's mission to add 75,000 trees to Detroit in five years.

"Just two years in, the project has had enormous impact already," said Lionel Bradford, president and CEO of the Greening of Detroit. "You may have already noticed new trees along commercial corridors, vegetative buffers near freeways and major thoroughfares and an increase of trees in parks, on greenways, on vacant lots. We are truly transforming blight to beauty, as Mayor Duggan would say."

This transformation has come with the work of hundreds of urban forestry experts and community volunteers who intentionally plant trees in areas of the city with a low tree canopy, meaning the people in those communities aren't able to reap the benefits of trees. Adding 25,000 trees to parts of Detroit where they are needed most lowers surface temperatures on the hottest days of the year, reduces asthma rates and lessens water runoff, enhancing everyone's quality of life.

The partnership is helmed by DTE Energy, Greening of Detroit and the City of Detroit bringing together the public, corporate and non-profit sectors to create a program that both plants trees and creates jobs in the Motor City. This structure has been a vital part of the success of the initiative.

"DTE has been with us since the begin-



ning on this," said Senator Debbie Stabenow at the event. "They've been out front, helping to build the coalition. This could not be done without the private sector."

This partnership has exemplified DTE's mission to improve lives with energy and the company's history of caring for the environment and the communities where employees live and serve.

"These 25,000 trees are improving lives by capturing carbon, bettering our climate and cooling temperatures in the heat of the summer," said Jerry Norcia, DTE chairman and CEO. "The trees we've planted today in this park will help cool the children who play here in the future with lots of shade."

Monday's planting was at Bailey Park in the McDougall-Hunt neighborhood in Detroit, adding trees near a playground for everyone in the neighborhood to enjoy as

they grow through the years.

"It's amazing how far this city's come," said Mayor Mike Duggan. "We've gone from cutting down 7,000 dead trees to planting 25,000 live trees, on our way to 75,000 live trees. This is what blight to beauty means."

While the impact can be seen and felt at the city level, it's the people who live in the communities where these trees are planted that experience the difference every day.

"It's so much more than about planting a tree," said Katrina Watkins, founder, Bagley Park Neighborhood Development Corporation. "It's about climate change, it's about tree equity because, in McDougall-Hunt, there is a lack of tree equity and park equity and that's the type of equity we're trying to create and inspire not just here but in other neighborhoods as well."

Powering the community with Neighborhood Energy Efficiency Day (NEED)

DTE is committed to helping customers maximize their home's energy efficiency and help save on their energy bills through program measures and cost-saving tips. That's why their team is continuing its long-standing partnership with The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) to assist customers in need heading into the winter season to ensure customers have the home equipment and safety upgrades, and financial support before temperatures drop.

Earlier this month, the DTE Energy Efficiency Assistance (EEA) team and THAW hosted NEED Day in Detroit's Yorkshire Woods neighborhood, providing nearly 200 energy efficiency kits, scheduled home energy assessments and other resources for eligible customers. The energy efficiency kits included LED bulbs, advanced power strips, power



switches, night lights, weather stripping, power outlet safety plugs.

Installing these measures help reduce wasted standby power and could save up to \$200 annually on energy bills. Energy auditors were also onsite conducting home assessments to identify home energy-saving opportunities and following up with customers to



install free energy upgrades such as programmable thermostats, water heaters, furnace tune-ups and replacements, insulation and other energy-efficient measures.

DTE offers several programs and initiatives available to help you reduce energy use and save more. For more no cost and low-cost tips, visit dteenergy.com/saveenergy. To learn more about our EEA program and customer eligibility requirements, visit dteenergy.com/eeassistance or call 313.351.5320 ext. 8.

Eliminating Barriers: Detroit’s “Rides to Care” Program Offers Lifeline for Pregnant Women and New Mothers

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Detroit is taking a step to address a pressing challenge for expectant mothers: reliable transportation to prenatal care appointments. For a city where nearly one-third of residents don’t own a car and buses are often unreliable, the impact of transportation barriers is profound. This gap can make the difference between life and death, particularly for Black mothers and their babies, who are disproportionately affected by poor maternal and infant health outcomes. The Detroit Health Department recently launched the “Rides to Care” program to address these barriers head-on.

Announced Monday during a press conference at Wayne Health on Mack Avenue, the \$1.2 million program provides free rides for pregnant women to access critical prenatal care. The initiative, created in partnership with Uber Health, is HIPAA-compliant and offers non-emergency medical transportation to healthcare providers located within five miles of Detroit’s borders. The program also extends its services to new mothers for up to one year after their child’s birth, ensuring consistent access to healthcare during a vital period.

“We want to give Detroit babies, moms, and families their best chance for a healthy start and to help families thrive,” said Denise Fair Razo, chief public health officer for the Detroit Health Department. Her statement underscored the urgency of the program, which began operating on a limited basis two weeks ago and is now fully available to eligible Detroit residents.

The need for such an initiative is underscored by troubling data. According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, 14 out of every 1,000 babies born in Detroit die before their first birthday. This is more than double the national average of 5.6 infant deaths per 1,000 births. The disparity is even greater for Black infants, who die at a rate three times higher than their white counterparts across the United States. Mayor Mike Duggan acknowledged the severity of these statistics, saying, “There are many factors that go into it, but nothing can change the trajectory of those numbers faster than going to see your doctor.”

Dr. David Bryant, chief of obstetrics at Hutzel Women’s Hospital, reinforced the critical role of prenatal care in improving these outcomes. “We can’t interact in a positive way with our patients if they are not present,” Bryant said, emphasizing the importance of removing transportation as a barrier. He called prenatal care “absolutely critical,” highlighting that timely and consistent medical visits can significantly improve maternal and infant health.

For many Detroiters, accessing healthcare is a logistical challenge. A study from Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan found that about one-third of Detroit residents do not have access to a car. Meanwhile, the city’s bus system remains unreliable, with buses leaving on time less than 75% of the time, according to Detroit



Department of Transportation data. These challenges disproportionately affect low-income residents, many of whom are Black women. Programs like “Rides to Care” aim to address these inequities by ensuring that access to care is not dependent on access to a vehicle.

The program has already made a tangible difference for mothers like 18-year-old Anastasia Lewis, a Detroit resident who began using the service during her pregnancy. “I feel like it’s very helpful for moms like me who can’t drive or don’t have a car,” Lewis said. “It’s a good village, and it’s helping everybody right now.” Lewis relied on the program when she was seven months pregnant with her daughter, Skylar Burks, and continues to use it for her postpartum healthcare needs. Before the official launch of “Rides to Care,” Lewis accessed similar support through SisterFriends, a city-sponsored volunteer initiative that assists young mothers during their first year of parenting. The rides were previously offered on a case-by-case basis but are now consistently available to all eligible participants.

The importance of extending the program to include postpartum care cannot be overstated. Dr. Lynn Smitherman, associate professor of pediatrics at Wayne State University School of Medicine, highlighted the necessity of ongoing medical attention for mothers and babies during the first year of life. “Last week alone, I had two newborn (families) cancel their appointments because they didn’t have transportation,” Smitherman said. She noted that healthcare providers closely monitor both mothers and babies during this critical period, making it essential for families to keep their appointments.

Mayor Duggan acknowledged the broader challenges of addressing Detroit’s high infant mortality rate but stressed that access to prenatal and postpartum care is a vital starting point. While structural inequities in healthcare, economic stability, and systemic racism contribute to the stark disparities in maternal and infant health, programs like “Rides to Care” provide a targeted solution to one of the most immediate

barriers: transportation.

The program is creating a system of support that allows families to thrive. Fair Razo’s comments about giving families their “best chance for a healthy start” reflect the broader goal of the initiative: to build healthier communities by addressing the root causes of poor health outcomes. By eliminating transportation barriers, the program enables mothers to prioritize their health and that of their children, setting the foundation for long-term well-being.

For healthcare providers, the program offers a critical opportunity to reach patients who might otherwise fall through the cracks. Dr. Bryant’s remarks about the importance of patient presence underscore the frustration many providers face when barriers like transportation prevent them from delivering care. The “Rides to Care” initiative addresses this gap, ensuring that expectant and new mothers can access the resources they need without worrying

Detroit’s Police Oversight Board Launches Dashboard to Boost Transparency and Accountability

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Transparency has often been a cornerstone demand from communities seeking accountability in law enforcement. Detroit’s Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC) has taken a step forward with the launch of a new dashboard aimed at illuminating complaints filed against Detroit police officers from 2012 to the present. This move signals a response to years of public scrutiny and a recognition of the need for clear and accessible oversight data.

Since 2012, a total of 16,377 citizen complaints have been filed against Detroit police officers. As of now, 2,358 of those complaints remain open. Before the dashboard’s creation, information about complaints was shared through monthly and weekly reports to the BOPC by the Office of the Chief Investigator. This limited access left many community members questioning the transparency and efficiency of the oversight process. With this new tool, the public gains direct access to data previously confined to internal board reports, marking a significant shift in how information is shared.

BOPC Chair Darryl Woods describes the dashboard as a monumental development for building trust between Detroit’s residents and its public safety institutions. Woods emphasizes that the dashboard reflects a broader commitment to transparency, stating, “Transparency is the cornerstone of building trust between the community and our public safety institutions. This tool reflects our commitment to making data accessible and understandable.”

At a press conference, the BOPC showcased the dashboard, which provides insights into complaints without disclosing specific details. Users can explore aggregated data, such as the number of complaints filed each year, the types of allegations made, and the outcomes of investigations. The tool also includes demographic information about both the complainants and the officers involved, along with data on the precincts where the officers serve. Mary Barber, a Civilian Oversight Analyst for the BOPC, highlights the importance of this level of analysis, noting that it offers an opportunity to examine patterns and disparities in policing practices.

The process following a complaint involves the BOPC determining whether allegations are substantiated. If they are, the complaint is forwarded to the Detroit Police Department’s disciplinary division for further action. However, the board is pushing for more transparency about what happens next. Board Member QuanTez Pressley underscores the need to understand the consequences of sustained misconduct allegations. “I think that’s of utmost importance to our community, to know what was the consequence of the misconduct that we found was sustained through the investigation,” Pressley says.

The dashboard, coupled with the city’s open data portal, enables residents to track the status of their complaints using unique complaint report numbers. While the dashboard updates in near-real-time, data on the city’s portal is refreshed every 26 days, offering another layer of accessibility for those seeking information.

Pressley underscores that the creation of the dashboard directly responds to community calls for transparency. By exceeding national standards for civilian oversight, the board aims to foster trust and encourage deeper engagement with the oversight process. “Our hope is that this dashboard

about how they’ll get there.

For Detroit families, the program’s impact is already being felt. Lewis’s story is a testament to the difference this initiative can make in the lives of young mothers navigating the challenges of parenthood. By providing reliable transportation to medical appointments, the program removes a significant source of stress for mothers like Lewis, allowing them to focus on their health and their children’s well-being.

The stakes for programs like “Rides to Care” are high. With Black infants dying at three times the rate of white infants and Detroit’s overall infant mortality rate more than double the national average, addressing these disparities requires bold and targeted action. While there is no single solution to these complex challenges, initiatives like this one represent an important step toward health equity in Detroit.

As the program continues to expand, its success will depend on sustained investment and community support. The Detroit Health Department’s partnership with Uber Health demonstrates how public and private sectors can collaborate to address systemic issues. By prioritizing the needs of vulnerable populations, the program sends a clear message: access to healthcare is not a privilege—it’s a right.

For many Detroiters, the “Rides to Care” program is a lifeline that connects them to critical healthcare and a broader network of support. As Lewis said, “It’s a good village, and it’s helping everybody right now.” Her words reflect the spirit of the initiative, which aims to build a healthier and more equitable future for Detroit families. By removing transportation barriers, the city is not only limited to addressing a logistical challenge—it’s investing in the lives of its mothers and children. For a city with so much at stake, programs like “Rides to Care” are a reminder that progress starts with meeting people where they are.

Detroit Chamber Unveils 2024 Education Report, Highlights Shifting Viewson Higher Ed

By Amber Ogden
STAFF WRITER

The Detroit Regional Chamber has recently published its highly anticipated 2024 State of Education and Talent report, offering an in-depth analysis of the region’s progress in educational attainment and the evolving landscape of the talent pipeline. This comprehensive report highlights critical data on regional, statewide, and national trends, examining key metrics such as college enrollment rates, workforce readiness, and the persistent talent shortages impacting high-demand industries.

By combining fresh insights with long-term trends, the report sheds light on the challenges and opportunities shaping education and workforce development, providing a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and industry leaders.

The report also incorporates findings from two key research projects conducted in partnership with The Glengariff Group, Inc. One project involved a detailed survey of high school parents to understand their views on higher education. At the same time, the other featured a focus group with high school students to explore their attitudes and experiences with post-secondary education.

These studies reveal significant themes and contrasting perspectives between parents and students, offering a nuanced look at how each group values and approaches higher education. The findings highlight the complex dynamics influencing educational decisions and aspirations in the region.

This report is an important tool in assessing the Detroit Region’s progress toward its 60% by 2030 post-high school educational attainment goal – a goal set by the Chamber that is more important than ever as economic prosperity is increasingly tied to the population’s level of education.

The business community and the Chamber are well aware of this, and to better reflect this landscape and encompass the organization’s robust portfolio of education and talent programs, it is unveiling a new, overarching brand for this work: TalentEd.

The brand merges the concepts of “Talent” and “Education” to effectively convey to the business community its role in collaboration with the Chamber. It emphasizes the importance of working together to develop a strong talent pipeline that addresses the specific needs of employers.

This initiative aims to equip the workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in today’s competitive en-

vironment by fostering partnerships and providing targeted educational opportunities.

The Data

The Chamber’s Greg Handel lead the conversation with a handful of the report’s takeaways:

- Adults returning to college will be a key factor in reaching the 60% by 2030 educational attainment goal set by the Chamber in 2015. Post-high school educational attainment in the Detroit Region has increased by three percentage points since 2018. However, more than 300,000 individuals must earn an associate degree or higher to meet the 60% by 2030 goal.
- An equity gap in educational attainment still exists, with the rate for Black or African American adults at 41.6% and white adults at 56.2%. Further, Black or African American students account for 13% of total degree completions despite making up 21% of the Detroit Region’s adult population.
- Talent demand is outpacing degree completions. Industries such as accounting, IT, and nursing are particularly falling short of meeting the increased demand for qualified workers.

“The ramifications of this are very simple: Employers will grow or locate to regions that have the talent needed to fill their positions,” Handel said.

“If we don’t have that talent, [employers] won’t grow or locate here.”

Director of Education and Employment at Rocket Community Fund, Marvin Logan Jr., highlighted the importance of clarifying corporate opportunities and identifying the obstacles to accessing them.

“Invite other companies to find innovative ways to find the talent because it’s out there. There are so many things that get in between that journey from point A to point B, and hyper-investing in the middle part of that journey is how you get persistent to graduation,” Logan Jr. said.

“And then let’s make sure, we do the work to continue to build bridges so that there’s something waiting there for them, and that is something else again.”

The Chamber’s 60% by 2030 educational attainment goal is more important than ever as economic prosperity is increasingly tied to the population’s level of education. The Chamber’s TalentEd program is designed to better communicate to the business community about building a robust talent pipeline that meets employers’ needs.

To view the fifth annual State of Education and Talent report, visit [detroitchamber.com](#).



For exonerees, the consequences of systemic flaws are deeply personal, and they understand the urgency of building a fairer system. Their statement continues, “As exonerees, we know the devastating impact of flawed systems and the urgent need for accountability. Transparency is essential to fostering a safer, fairer, and more equitable justice system. We applaud the Board of Police Commissioners for their commitment to building a better future for Detroit.”

The dashboard remains a work in progress, with plans to introduce features that will allow users to search for specific cases. Barber welcomes public input to refine the tool further, encouraging residents to share feedback through the Citizen Complaint Committee, chaired by Pressley.

Filing a complaint has also been streamlined. Residents can now submit their concerns online, in person at any Detroit police precinct, or by phone. This accessibility aims to remove barriers that might have previously discouraged individuals from coming forward with their experiences.

While the launch of the dashboard marks a significant achievement, it also raises questions about how transparency will lead to tangible outcomes. The board’s commitment to understanding the impact of disciplinary actions and their continued dialogue with the Detroit Police Department will be critical in bridging the gap between transparency and accountability.

This new tool invites the community to participate in oversight more actively, offering data to inform public discourse and build a foundation for accountability. For a city like Detroit, where the relationship between law enforcement and residents has often been strained, steps like this provide an opportunity to rebuild trust. Transparency is not the end goal, but it is a necessary starting point. As the board continues to refine the dashboard, its success will depend on whether it leads to real accountability and justice for those impacted by police misconduct.

Through this initiative, the BOPC is showing that transparency and community engagement are essential to creating a justice system that serves all Detroiters equitably. The hope is that this tool will not only empower residents but also hold those in power accountable, fostering a city where trust in public safety institutions is not just a goal but a reality.

Detroit Takes a Stand: City Council Moves to Protect Youth from Harmful Substance Ads

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

In Michigan, marijuana is legal, and cities like Detroit have embraced this new reality with open arms, recognizing its potential for economic growth and equity in the cannabis industry. However, the overwhelming presence of marijuana advertisements cannot be ignored. The truth is, they're everywhere—on billboards near schools, plastered across bus stops, and dominating storefronts. This constant visibility normalizes consumption in ways that disproportionately impact our youth, raising urgent questions about the balance between economic opportunity and community health.

Detroit City Council took a decisive step Tuesday to protect its children from the pervasive influence of harmful advertising. In a landmark resolution, the council set the groundwork for banning advertisements promoting marijuana, tobacco, and nicotine products in areas frequented by children. This action signals a critical shift in Detroit's approach to safeguarding public health while confronting the growing normalization of substances among its youth.

Council Members Scott Benson and Angela Whitfield-Calloway championed this measure, underscoring the urgent need for stronger regulation. "It's incumbent on us to protect the youth," Benson stated a clear acknowledgment of the responsibility local leadership bears in this era where marijuana has become more accessible and affordable. Their commitment reflects a broader understanding of how advertising can shape behavior, particularly in vulnerable populations.

The resolution is a formal declaration that the city has a compelling interest in shielding children from exposure to advertisements for substances that pose significant health risks. This step also clears a legal pathway for Detroit to impose targeted restrictions on commercial speech without violating First Amendment rights. By affirming this interest, the city sets the stage to implement a far-reaching ordinance that will reshape its advertising landscape.

Once enacted, the proposed ordinance will ban advertisements for marijuana, tobacco, and nicotine products within 1,000 feet of places where children gather, including schools, parks, childcare centers, libraries, and recreational facilities. These restrictions aim to disrupt the visibility of ads that normalize substance use among Detroit's youth. Christina Floyd, deputy director of the city's Health Department, highlighted a troubling correlation: marijuana and vaping usage are higher in areas with more advertisements. This data points to an environment where children are constantly exposed to products that can harm them, making regulation a necessary step.

Detroit's efforts come as marijuana tax revenue continues to grow. The city's 2025 budget projects a significant increase in marijuana tax income, nearly doubling from \$1.9 million to \$3.7 million. These funds, derived from an expanding number of licensed marijuana businesses, are split

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Michigan's Entrepreneurial Rise Drives Opportunity and Innovation

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Michigan's rise as the third-best state for entrepreneurial success in 2025 tells a story of resilience, ingenuity, and transformation. With an 8.9% growth in business establishments between 2022 and 2023, the state continues to redefine its economic landscape. This growth reflects a dynamic shift in opportunities across industries fueled by local talent and community-driven initiatives.

Michigan saw the creation of 26,612 new businesses, increasing from 298,855 in 2022 to 325,467 in 2023. This accomplishment places the state just behind Montana, which achieved a 9.4% growth rate, and Oregon, which led the nation with a 9.9% increase in new businesses. While the numbers provide a clear picture of upward momentum, the lived experiences of entrepreneurs across Michigan give depth to this narrative.

Detroit, Michigan's largest city, plays a critical role in this transformation. Entrepreneurs in Detroit are capitalizing on its rich cultural heritage while leveraging its emerging role as a hub for technology and innovation. The city is home to an increasing number of Black-owned businesses that reflect its historic resilience and creative energy. Local entrepreneurs are building startups in tech, retail, and food services, all while prioritizing their communities. These efforts breathe new life into neighborhoods that have long been overlooked.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation has been instrumental in supporting small businesses and startups.

Through grants, mentorship programs, and access to capital, entrepreneurs in Michigan are finding pathways to success that might have been inaccessible in the past. Initiatives like Motor City Match, which provides funding and resources to new businesses in Detroit, have enabled entrepreneurs to turn their visions into tangible, community-focused ventures.

Black entrepreneurs across Michigan are pushing the boundaries of what's possible. These business leaders are not only launching new ventures but also creating generational wealth in historically marginalized communities. Programs focused on diversity and inclusion are making a measurable impact, providing Black-owned businesses with the tools to scale and thrive. This shift represents a meaningful departure from decades of systemic barriers that left many entrepreneurs behind.

Entrepreneurship is also flourishing outside of Michigan's urban centers. Smaller cities and towns across the state are seeing growth as new businesses open their doors. In Grand Rapids, innovative food entrepreneurs are redefining the local culinary scene. In Flint, community leaders are turning to small businesses as a vehicle for revitalization. These efforts reflect the state's diverse economy and its ability to adapt to change.

Oregon's top ranking, with a 9.9% growth in businesses, demonstrates what's possible when state policies align with entrepreneurial needs. Michigan's rise highlights the importance of pairing state-level support with local innovation. While Oregon added 18,273 new businesses, Michigan's net increase of over 26,000

shows that the scale of its entrepreneurial success is significant. Entrepreneurs in Michigan are building on the state's industrial legacy while charting a new course for the future.

Montana, which ranked second, saw a net increase of 5,762 businesses, growing from 61,185 in 2022 to 66,947 in 2023. Though smaller in scale, Montana's 9.4% growth rate underscores the potential for entrepreneurship in less densely populated areas. Michigan's ability to achieve an 8.9% growth rate while supporting a large and diverse population showcases its broad economic impact.

The study also reveals that not all states are experiencing similar success. Virginia, which recorded a 5% decline in businesses between 2022 and 2023, underscores the challenges states face when they fail to create supportive environments for entrepreneurs. Michigan's growth provides a sharp contrast, showing that deliberate efforts to invest in small businesses can lead to significant progress.

Entrepreneurs in Michigan are addressing more than just market opportunities. Many are solving critical challenges within their communities. From tackling food insecurity to creating sustainable solutions in clean energy, Michigan's businesses are shaping a future that prioritizes equity and innovation. Entrepreneurs are leveraging local resources while building businesses that reflect their values and aspirations.

The growth in Michigan's entrepreneurship is a testament to the resilience and innovation of its people. See **ENTREPRENEURIAL RISE**
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Detroit Secures Its Legacy: \$500K Fund Supports Long-Standing Small Businesses

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Detroit is a city that carries a legacy in its DNA—a cultural cornerstone where the rhythm of Motown still echoes, the innovation of the automobile industry remains unmatched, and fashion tells stories of pride and resilience. Families and businesses that have shaped its history for decades remain central to its identity. Legacy businesses are more than just fixtures in the community. They carry the stories of Detroit's past and contribute to its present through cultural and economic impact. That's why it matters when they're not only remembered by loyal customers but also actively supported by the very city they've helped build. Their recognition and support from the city they serve highlight the importance of preserving what makes Detroit unique. These businesses represent the strength and spirit of Detroit, ensuring its history remains alive for future generations.

Bert's Marketplace in Detroit's Eastern Market set the stage for a powerful announcement—a moment that spoke directly to the soul of the city and the legacy of its people. Standing before a backdrop of Detroit's rich cultural history, City Council President Mary Sheffield, representatives from Mayor Mike Duggan's Office, and Detroit Economic Growth Corporation officials introduced the Detroit Legacy Business Project (DLBP). This initiative aims to honor and sustain the small businesses that have shaped Detroit for generations.



The \$500,000 investment serves as more than financial support. It reflects a dedication to preserving the stories of resilience and success that define Detroit's legacy businesses. The program provides grants between \$15,000 and \$50,000, totaling 16 awards. Each of Detroit's seven council districts will receive two \$15,000 grants alongside two citywide \$50,000 grants. Applications are now open and will remain

available through December 23, 2024.

"The Detroit Legacy Business Project is not just about preserving businesses – it's about preserving the stories, communities, and legacy that make our beloved city unique," said Sheffield. "By investing in these long-standing businesses, we are ensuring that Detroit's rich history remains an integral part of our culture and empowering future generations of entrepreneurs to build upon that foundation."

Small businesses are often described as the backbone of communities, but in Detroit, they are more like the beating heart. These businesses represent more than transactions; they are where relationships are formed and traditions are passed down. For a city that has seen its share of challenges, these establishments have stood firm, offering jobs, mentorship, and a sense of belonging. This program acknowledges their resilience while offering a path to sustainability.

The qualifications for the program are clear and intentional. Eligible businesses must have operated in Detroit for at least 30 years and demonstrate their impact on the city's cultural fabric. They must also be independently owned and have physical locations accessible to the public. The funding can be used for inventory, equipment, building improvements, and business consulting, ensuring that recipients can address their unique needs.

Justin Onwenu, Director of Entrepreneurship and Economic Opportunity for the City of Detroit, outlined the importance of these investments. "As the City of Detroit works to create the jobs of the future, we are excited to invest in the entrepreneurs and legacy businesses that have served as foundations in our communities. Small businesses are drivers in economic growth, and we are excited to make needed invest-

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Harmful Advertising Ban

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between the General Fund and targeted social equity initiatives. A notable \$1 million is allocated annually to Homegrown Detroit, a program aimed at addressing racial inequities in the cannabis industry. The remaining \$2.5 million supports citywide services.

However, only two percent of this revenue—approximately \$40,000—is designated for youth substance abuse prevention through a program called Too Good for Drugs. This six-week initiative, designed to serve 500 to 1,000 children in four Detroit public schools, represents an important but limited response to a much larger problem. Negotiations to launch the program this fall are underway, but the scale of the funding underscores a critical gap in resources.

The health department has estimated that providing comprehensive substance abuse prevention programs to all of Detroit's 170,000 youth would require upwards of \$5 million annually, along with additional staffing. Current marijuana tax revenues fall significantly short of meeting this need, raising questions about how the city can

better align its financial priorities with its public health goals.

Detroit's share of state marijuana excise taxes illustrates the challenges of securing adequate funding. The city's portion is determined by the number of marijuana licenses issued locally. Of the 737 licenses statewide, Detroit holds 33, which accounts for four percent of total licenses and roughly \$1.9 million in excise tax revenue. As the state collected \$290 million in marijuana taxes last year, Detroit's share reflects a broader tension between economic opportunities in the cannabis industry and the social costs associated with its proliferation.

Benson and Whitfield-Calloway have stressed the need to balance these competing interests. Regulating advertisements is one way to protect children from the influence of substances while preserving the economic benefits of marijuana legalization. Yet the council must also grapple with how to allocate existing funds more effectively. Expanding programs like Too Good for Drugs would require legislative changes to direct a greater percentage of marijuana tax revenue toward youth preven-

tion efforts.

The reality is clear: Detroit's children are growing up in an environment where marijuana is increasingly normalized. Though marijuana is notably legal and has become an acceptable substance of choice, the advertising being as accessible to minors is causing concern. As more businesses open and advertising expands, the city faces a critical moment in which to act decisively. Restricting advertisements near places where children live and play is an important first step, but it must be part of a larger, sustained effort to address the systemic factors that make these substances accessible to youth.

The council's actions also signal a broader commitment to prioritizing public health over profit. While the economic benefits of marijuana tax revenue are significant, they cannot come at the expense of Detroit's children. Floyd's data linking advertisement density to higher usage rates provides a stark reminder of the stakes involved. For every ad removed from the vicinity of a school or park, the city reduces the chances that a child will be influenced to try marijuana or vaping.

Detroit's leaders now have an opportunity to build on this momentum. By adopting a proactive stance, the city can set a precedent for how urban centers nationwide address the intersection of public health and marijuana legalization. This resolution is an attempt to reclaim the environments where children should feel safe and free from harmful influences.

As Detroit moves forward with its ordinance, the challenges of funding and implementation remain. The city must find ways to expand substance abuse prevention programs, secure additional resources, and address the root causes of youth substance use. These efforts will require collaboration across city departments, community organizations, and advocacy groups. It will also demand a willingness to rethink how marijuana tax revenues are allocated to ensure they reflect the city's priorities.

The council's resolution is a vital step in a long journey. It acknowledges the power of policy to shape outcomes and the responsibility of leaders to act in the best interests of their communities. For Detroit's children, this action sends a powerful message: their health and well-being come first. As the city moves toward adopting the ordinance, it must remain focused on the bigger picture—a future where children can grow up without the shadow of harmful advertising influencing their choices.

Detroit Legacy Business Project

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ments to ensure that they continue to thrive in the City of Detroit."

For Lauren Stovall, this announcement was deeply personal. As the daughter of Tony Stovall, founder of Hot Sam's, one of Detroit's oldest legacy businesses, Lauren's understanding of the struggles and triumphs of long-standing small businesses is firsthand. Her journey from growing up in her father's store to creating a program that uplifts businesses like his is a testament to her dedication.

"I have had a unique burden for legacy businesses for the past few years. I came to recognize them as a unique and set apart sector within the general small business sector, and I believed there was more that we as a community and city could do to honor and serve them," Stovall shared. "It's important that we see them right; as pillars and anchors that serve as cultural assets of the city and within the community."

This initiative goes beyond financial assistance by creating Detroit's first Legacy Business Registry. This registry will formally honor businesses that have operated in the city for 30 years or more. It will provide access to additional technical and financial resources, ensuring these businesses have the tools to thrive. The registry also underscores their role as cultural institutions, offering a platform to celebrate their lasting contributions to Detroit's identity and history.

Sean Gray, vice president of Small Business Services at the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, explained the broader vision. "Legacy businesses are more than just storefronts – they're job creators and second-chance employers who've supported Detroit families for generations. These businesses have shown incredible resilience through Detroit's ups and downs, often being the first to give opportunities to returning citizens and local residents. This initiative helps ensure they can continue serving as economic anchors in our neighborhoods for decades to come."

The timeline for the program is as carefully considered as its purpose. Applications are open now, with submissions closing on December 23, 2024, at 8 a.m. Grant recipients will be announced on February 21, 2025. Business owners can find more information and apply at detroitmi.gov/opportunities/detroit-legacy-business-project.

For too long, Detroit's legacy businesses have shouldered the responsibility of representing the city's resilience without adequate support. They have weathered economic downturns, shifts in industries, and the challenges that come with remaining locally owned in an era of corporate expansion. This initiative flips that narrative, offering these businesses a chance to thrive, not just survive.

Stovall's vision for honoring legacy businesses represents a necessary shift in how cities approach economic development. Her efforts, along with those of the city and its partners, create a framework for recognizing and uplifting businesses as cultural assets, not just economic entities.

As Detroit continues to push forward, this program serves as a reminder of where its strength lies—in the neighborhoods, the people, and the businesses that have held it together. For legacy business owners, this is more than an opportunity. It is a validation of their work, their endurance, and their place in Detroit's future. For the community, it is a chance to celebrate and support the spaces that have shaped their lives.

This is a pivotal moment for Detroit. By investing in its legacy businesses, the city invests in its identity and ensures that its history remains a cornerstone of its progress. This initiative doesn't just promise financial support; it reinforces the value of those who have built Detroit into what it is today and what it will become.



Sixteen42 Ventures CEO Dennis Archer Jr. and Huntington Bank Board Chair Gary Torgow.

Michigan Chronicle's Pancakes & Politics Overdrive II Sparks Urgent Dialogue on Detroit's Future

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

The Michigan Chronicle's Pancakes & Politics Overdrive returned as an extension of its signature series, diving into pivotal conversations shaping Detroit's future. Known for addressing pressing topics impacting Black communities, this session came with a renewed sense of urgency following the election of Donald Trump as the 47th president of the United States and the new political tasks to look forward to right here in the city of Detroit. The discussion brought together Dennis Archer Jr., a prominent Detroit businessman and a member of one of the city's most respected political families, and Gary Torgow, chairman of Huntington Bank and descendant of Russian immigrants. Their one-on-one conversation offered critical insights into Detroit's path forward.

The Pancakes & Politics series has long been a platform for fostering dialogue that prioritizes the voices of those deeply rooted in Detroit's communities. The Overdrive edition builds on this legacy by creating a focused space for in-depth conversations about the intersection of politics, business, and community development. For Detroiters navigating new challenges under a Trump administration, these discussions are an essential tool for unpacking complex issues.

The one-on-one format allowed for a focused discussion that avoided surface-level generalities, diving into the nuances of what Detroit needs to thrive. Archer Jr. reflected on Detroit's political and economic

landscape, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between community stakeholders and institutions. He drew on his own experiences to frame the conversation, noting the ways systemic challenges have persisted despite periods of progress.

The election of Donald Trump has added new dimensions to these conversations. Policies affecting economic equity, racial justice, DEI, and community development will inevitably shape the environment in which Detroiters live and work. Pancakes & Politics Overdrive served as a timely platform for unpacking what these shifts mean for the city and how stakeholders can respond effectively.

As the conversation concluded, it was clear that Pancakes & Politics Overdrive continues to fulfill its purpose as a platform for real, impactful dialogue. By creating a space where leaders like Archer Jr. and Torgow can engage deeply with the issues affecting Detroit, the Michigan Chronicle is upholding its legacy as a critical voice for the city's Black community. The conversation wasn't just about what's wrong—it was a step toward determining what's next.

Pancakes & Politics Overdrive remains a testament to the power of intentional dialogue in addressing the complexities of a majority-Black city navigating unprecedented challenges.

To watch the full video with Archer Jr. and Torgow, open your camera on your cell phone and scan the QR code below.



Entrepreneurial Rise

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neural sector is creating ripple effects throughout the state's economy. New businesses generate jobs, revitalize neighborhoods, and contribute to the tax base. These economic benefits strengthen communities and provide opportunities for individuals and families to build wealth. Michigan's success is not just an economic story; it's a social one, grounded in the belief that communities thrive when businesses are supported.

Virginia's decline, with a net loss of 16,522 businesses, serves as a reminder of what's at stake when

states fail to prioritize entrepreneurs. Michigan's rise illustrates the power of strategic investments and the value of fostering an environment where businesses can grow. Entrepreneurs in Michigan are leading the way by showing how community-focused initiatives can drive broader economic progress.

Michigan's growth as the third-best state for entrepreneurial success is more than a ranking—it's a reflection of the people who make this state what it is. Every new business represents someone's hard work, vision, and determination. Entrepreneurs in Michigan are proving that success is not lim-

ited to one industry or one city. Instead, it's a collective effort rooted in community and driven by innovation.

The state's progress is also a call to action for policymakers, business leaders, and community members to continue investing in entrepreneurs. The momentum Michigan has built is just the beginning. By continuing to address barriers to entry, expanding access to capital, and fostering inclusivity, the state can solidify its position as a leader in entrepreneurship. Michigan's story is not just about where it ranks—it's about where it's headed. Entrepreneurs in Michigan are building a future that reflects the state's values, creativity, and resilience.

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Motor City Match Winner Transforms Detroit Healthcare with 1st Step Healthcare Training

By Amber Ogden
STAFF WRITER

In a city renowned for its resilience and reinvention, Annette Anderson stands out as a catalyst for change. On city billboards and commercials, a devoted mother, skilled nurse, and ambitious entrepreneur, Anderson has woven her passions into 1st Step Healthcare Training, a transformative hub for healthcare education in Detroit.

With the support of Motor City Match, Black Business Alliance and QT Business Solutions she has built more than just a business; she's created a community where aspiring healthcare workers find not only training but a pathway to meaningful careers. Anderson's mission is clear, to empower Detroiters to step confidently into the future, one healthcare professional at a time.



Annette Anderson
stop me, and they see me. I envisioned this day happening. I just didn't see it happening so soon," Anderson said.

"And it makes me feel good because I know where my beginning was, and I know that I'm serving my purpose by allowing other young men and young women, or even older men and older women, especially those who are Black and Brown, to see like, it doesn't matter where you came from, you make it to wherever you want to go. So that makes me really happy."

Born and raised in Detroit, Anderson has always had a passion for healthcare and education. After spending years in the field, she recognized a pressing need for accessible, high-quality training programs for entry-level healthcare positions.

After being an RN since 20017, Anderson founded 1st Step Healthcare Training to bridge the gap for residents seeking careers as certified nursing assistants (CNAs), home health aides, and medical assistants.

Today, Anderson teaches the technical aspects of healthcare and instills confidence and resilience in her students, enabling them to navigate the healthcare industry's complexities. Her work is a testament to the transformative impact of education and community support on economic growth in Detroit.

"I have been in healthcare for 13 years, and I started off as a CNA 13 years ago, and branched out to become a registered nurse. And over these last few years, healthcare has just changed, especially since COVID; they stopped requiring nursing assistants to be certified to work in these establishments," Anderson said.

"I started seeing a huge lack in patient care, patient empathy, and compassion. I



Image courtesy of Motor City Match

was like, Okay, I have to do something to change the dynamics because healthcare is not right."

1st Step Healthcare Training provides rigorous programs, small class sizes, and hands-on learning opportunities. Anderson's approach has garnered attention for its high job placement rates and emphasis on student support.

The road to establishing her healthcare training center wasn't easy. Starting out, Anderson faced challenges such as securing funding and finding a suitable location for her business. That's when Motor City Match, a Detroit-based program that connects entrepreneurs with resources, stepped in by way of QT Business Solutions, Inc. COO Tina Williams, who helped Anderson write her business plan.

"She told me about it (Motor City Match), and I took the business plan that her company helped me write, and I submitted my application with her assistance, and next thing you know, I was going to the Motor City match orientation, the conferences they were having, the events they were having, and learning more about it," Anderson said.

Through Motor City Match, Anderson gained financial support and technical assistance, enabling her to establish a fully equipped training facility at Henry Ford's Northwest Medical Center. With classrooms, simulation labs, and state-of-the-art equipment, Anderson's 1st Step Healthcare Training is now a comprehensive hub for aspiring healthcare professionals.

Madison Schillig, Motor City Match Program Director, mentions how much has been invested in local businesses throughout Detroit, just like Anderson's.

"Through Motor City Match, we've proudly invested \$19.1 million in grants to support Detroit's entrepreneurs like Annette," Schillig said.

"Supporting the dreams of small business owners across our city isn't just our mission – it's our privilege. We're excited to be part of Annette's entrepreneurial journey and look forward to her continued success."

Motor City Match continues to be an invaluable resource for Detroiters, "All Because (they) Live in Detroit," providing essential funding and guiding Anderson in building a sustainable business. By harnessing the power of entrepreneurship, Anderson is creating new opportunities in the healthcare industry, contributing to both workforce development and community revitalization in Detroit.

"When I found out that I won, I was like, Wow! I was just so grateful because that's what I already put into my business to help me grow it. And that just helped me out so tremendously," Anderson said.

"I owe Motor City Match so much for helping me out to open in business and get my doors open and keeping my doors open."

Since its establishment, 1st Step Healthcare Training has trained over 40 students, many of whom have gone on to work in local hospitals, nursing homes, and private care settings. Anderson's program is partic-

ularly focused on helping underserved populations, offering scholarships and flexible schedules for working adults.

Anderson's efforts have earned her recognition as a leader in Detroit's small business ecosystem. She continues to expand her services, recently launching partnerships with local healthcare providers to offer internships and job placements.

As for what's next, Anderson has her sights set on the official grand opening in January 2025 and is looking to continue expanding her business and giving scholarships to those who need them to pursue their education in the healthcare field. As she continues to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals, her dedication shines brightly as a testament to the spirit of innovation and hope in her community.

"Detroit is the best place to open up a business because there are so many different opportunities," Anderson said.

"So far, since I've opened my door, I have graduated nine classes. I'm on my tenth class right now. I just introduced a new program, phlebotomy. I just introduced EKG Technician (courses), which is coming in January. "I'm just looking forward to continuing to introduce programs because each student that I see comes into my classroom, and I get a chance to educate, train, and help get employed."

Interested in registering for a scholarship or to learn more information about what courses are offered, visit <https://first-stephealthcarentraining.com/>

Detroit's Drinking Water Is Safe: Addressing Lead Service Line Concerns and Ongoing Replacement Efforts

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Detroit residents have recently received federally required notifications about the material of their water service lines, sparking concerns about water quality. However, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) assures residents that the city's drinking water remains safe and exceeds all standards set by the Safe Drinking Water Act. These notifications, mandated under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Lead & Copper Rule, do not signal a change in water quality but rather aim to keep the public informed about service line materials.

For decades, Detroit has met or exceeded federal and state drinking water regulations. Gary Brown, Director of DWSD, emphasized this point, stating, "Our drinking water is safe and DWSD has exceeded all the required tests in the past 20 years and more. Last week, we mailed notification letters to more than 200,000 residents and businesses about the type of service line you may have based on our updated records. The letters do not indicate any change in the water quality in the system nor at your property – in fact, quality continues to improve as we replace lead service lines at a rapid pace."

These annual letters, part of an effort to provide transparency, include information about whether residents' water service lines are made of galvanized material, lead, or are unknown. Brown addressed concerns about the "unknown" designation, explaining, "The letter stating that a

service line material is 'unknown' is based on data available to us at this time. We continue to improve our records on a daily basis using mapping technology. We provide instructions on how you can find out whether you have a lead service line or not, and you can provide us that information to update our records."

To support this initiative, DWSD has launched an interactive service line inventory map, accessible at www.detroitmi.gov/lsr. The map, developed in collaboration with Ann Arbor-based BlueConduit, uses predictive modeling technology to display verified or assumed statuses of residents' pipe materials. Residents can watch an instructional video to learn how to navigate the map and determine the material of their water service line.

Residents have the ability to verify their service line material themselves using simple tools like a magnet and a penny. Step-by-step guidance is available through an NPR tool, and residents can submit their findings, along with a photo of their pipes, through an online form at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/a907177537c44329b3dc8870b0613f8>.

Since 2018, DWSD has replaced 11,335 lead service lines and plans to accelerate its efforts with the help of \$90 million in federal funding and an additional \$30 million from local bond funds. Prioritizing neighborhoods with higher concentrations of low-income residents, children, and seniors, DWSD is working systematically to replace all 80,000 lead service lines in Detroit over the next decade. This neighbor-

hood-by-neighborhood approach ensures resources are directed where they are most needed. Residents can stay updated on current and upcoming projects by visiting DWSD's website.

Brown also provided critical context for understanding the situation, noting that lead in water typically comes from older service lines and home plumbing, not the water distribution system. "The water leaving Detroit water treatment plants, operated by the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), does not contain lead," he explained. However, lead can enter drinking water from service lines and household plumbing as water moves from the city's mains to individual taps. Detroit has not allowed the installation of lead service lines since 1945, but homes built before that year are most likely to have lead pipes connecting them to the water main.

To mitigate the risk of lead contamination, the water provided to Detroit residents includes a corrosion inhibitor, which helps prevent lead from dissolving into the water supply. Brown underscored his confidence in the safety of Detroit's water by sharing his personal experience. "I've lived my entire life in the city of Detroit and have a lead service line at my own home where there is a three-year-old grandson and an 89-year-old mother-in-law. I use the water at my house and have full confidence in the quality."

This initiative is a direct response to nationwide concerns about lead in drinking water. Communities across the country, not just Detroit, are required to comply with the EPA's updated regulations under the Lead &



Copper Rule. The rule aims to ensure residents are informed and protected while mandating the replacement of outdated infrastructure that could pose health risks. Brown emphasized that DWSD is committed to transparency and ensuring public confidence in Detroit's water system, saying, "We're making every effort to communicate clearly and provide the tools necessary for residents to understand their service line material."

Public engagement plays a critical role in this process. DWSD encourages Detroiters to take an active role in identifying their service line materials and contributing to the department's records. This collaboration ensures that efforts to replace lead lines are as accurate and effective as possible. Residents can use the online map and resources provided to participate in this citywide effort.

Detroit's approach to replacing lead service lines demonstrates a commitment to equitable infrastructure improvement. Prioritizing neighborhoods based on income, age of residents, and housing stock reflects an understanding of the communities most vulnerable to potential health risks. By aligning federal funding with local priorities, DWSD is creating a blueprint for addressing lead in water systems that other

cities could follow.

The replacement of all 80,000 lead service lines in Detroit will take time, but the accelerated pace of progress shows the city's dedication to completing this monumental task. Residents who want to learn more or verify their service line material are encouraged to explore the resources available through DWSD's website and interactive map.

Detroit has faced its share of challenges, but the efforts of DWSD to ensure safe drinking water and modernized infrastructure reflect a city that prioritizes its residents' health and well-being. Brown's reassurances and the availability of tools for public engagement underscore the importance of collective action in tackling systemic issues like outdated water systems.

The notifications sent to Detroiters may have caused concern, but they also sparked a necessary conversation about infrastructure, transparency, and public trust. Detroit's water is safe, and the work being done to replace lead service lines ensures it will remain so for generations to come. This collaborative effort between city officials, community members, and federal partners highlights the strength of a city determined to move forward, one pipe at a time.

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From the Office of Wayne County Treasurer Eric R. Sabree



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THE RINK AT CAMPUS MARTIUS PARK

Opens for the Season, Bringing Detroit’s Holiday Spirit to Life

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

As a kid in Detroit, the arrival of the tree at Campus Martius and the opening of the ice rink marked the start of the holiday season. It was a sign as clear as the smell of hot cocoa in the crisp air. Those moments set the tone for what many knew was the unofficial anthem of the season: “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas.”

The holiday season in Detroit officially began on November 23, 2024, with the grand opening of The Rink at Campus Martius Park. Presented by Visit Detroit, this outdoor skating destination is now welcoming visitors for the 2024-2025 season. Located on Woodward Avenue, The Rink is a cherished tradition that brings families, friends, and visitors together in celebration of the season.

“As we mark the 21st season of The Rink at Campus Martius Park, Visit Detroit is proud to collaborate with the Downtown Detroit Partnership for another year. Every year, we welcome thousands of visitors across the region and beyond to

experience the quintessential winter Detroit experience that combines family entertainment, energizes our downtown shops and restaurants, and fosters memorable winter traditions and fun for everyone. For families returning to The Rink for another year or visitors experiencing it for the first time, The Rink showcases everything that makes Detroit a premier winter destination — proud community spirit and signature seasonal festivities,” said Claude Molinari, president and CEO of Visit Detroit.

The Rink at Campus Martius Park is more than an ice skating destination. Its central downtown location, surrounded by Detroit’s vibrant energy and holiday decorations, transforms it into a hub of joy and connection. Skaters of all ages glide across the ice while the city’s iconic Christmas tree and twinkling lights create a festive backdrop. For many, this is where holiday traditions are born and cherished.

Opening weekend, held on November 23 and 24, kicked off the season with a celebration that included skating parties and special guest appearances. It marked the start of a season that promises countless opportunities for families and friends to share

in the magic of the holidays. From children experiencing the thrill of skating for the first time to adults returning to a beloved tradition, The Rink is a space that embodies the spirit of Detroit.

For Detroiters, The Rink is more than just a fun outing. It is a reflection of the city’s resilience and its commitment to creating spaces where community thrives. Each year, it attracts visitors from across the region who come to experience one of the most iconic skating settings in the country. It stands as a reminder of the importance of investing in places that bring people together.

This season, Detroiters can also showcase their pride in The Rink on a national stage. It is a contender in USA Today’s 10 Best Readers’ Choice Awards for Best Ice Skating Rink. Votes can be cast daily at 10best.usatoday.com until polls close on December 9 at noon. A win would not only highlight The Rink but also shine a spotlight on Detroit’s ability to create spaces that inspire connection and joy.

“The Rink at Campus Martius Park is one of the nation’s most iconic and scenic skating experiences, drawing visitors from across the region to celebrate the holiday and winter seasons,” said David Cowan, chief public spaces officer with the Downtown Detroit Partnership. “This year, The Rink will once again open with a fun-filled weekend on the Saturday following the Detroit Tree Lighting. For the first time, guests can also enjoy a two-story glass chalet, a heated lounge with stunning views overlooking The Rink, Detroit’s Christmas tree and cityscape. Plan to spend the day downtown and take in Detroit’s festive lights, bustling winter markets, family-friendly activities, live entertainment and incredible dining spots. It’s the ultimate winter experience for everyone.”

For those planning to visit, details about pricing and schedules can be found at downtowndetroit.org. The Rink welcomes skaters of all skill levels, from beginners to seasoned enthusiasts. Beyond the skating experience, visitors can enjoy the surrounding ambiance of Campus Martius Park,

See **THE RINK AT CAMPUS MARTIUS PARK** Page B-2

Artist Austen Brantley Speaks Out After Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson Statue Theft Sparks Call to Preserve Black Legacy

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

A community feels a collective sting as news spreads about the recent theft of a bronze statue honoring the late Lt. Colonel Alexander Jefferson, a member of the renowned Tuskegee Airmen. For Detroit artist Austen Brantley, who crafted the statue, the act represents not just a personal blow but a moment of reckoning for the community about the value of public art and the commitment to preserving Black heritage. “People can destroy art,” Brantley says, “but I won’t give up. I will never stop creating and sharing work that speaks to our interconnected stories.”



This statue, a 600-pound bronze sculpture unveiled in Rouge Park earlier this year, stood as a tribute to Jefferson’s legacy — a proud reminder of Black resilience and accomplishment. Jefferson was part of an all-Black fighter squadron in World War II that defied racial discrimination to protect American bombers. As one of Detroit’s own, he fought on two fronts: against enemies abroad and systemic racism at home. The Airmen’s low loss record earned them respect, but the challenges of their time are far from forgotten. Jefferson passed in 2022 at 100 years old, leaving a legacy of perseverance and pride that Brantley sought to capture in bronze.

Brantley, known for his thoughtful, evocative sculptures, views his work as a bridge connecting personal histories to the broader human story. Each piece embodies narratives of struggle, triumph, and the everyday resilience of marginalized communities. His artistry celebrates Black identity and ensures that stories often overlooked are enshrined in public memory. Brantley explains, “This statue wasn’t just a figure in a park. It was a shared symbol, a connection to those who came before us and fought for the rights we have today. Public art like this reminds us of our past and inspires us to build our future.”

For months, Brantley worked closely with Jefferson’s family to shape a figure that reflected the veteran’s spirit. From his stance to his gaze, every detail of the statue was a testament to the Tuskegee Airman’s legacy as an educator, leader, and a

See **PRESERVE BLACK LEGACY** Page B-2



Image courtesy of The Parade Company

Detroit Fifth-Grader’s Winning Float Design Debuts in America’s Thanksgiving Parade



Image courtesy of The Parade Company

In a celebration of creativity and community spirit, the Skillman Foundation and Parade Company unveiled the grand prize winner of the 33rd annual Skillman Foundation Float Design Contest today—Harmony Henry, a talented fifth-grader from University Prep Art & Design Elementary in Detroit. Henry’s winning design is set to dazzle parade-goers with its vibrant, imaginative flair.

Henry’s inspiring “Make Your Own Story,” illustration, built into a life-size float by Parade Company artists, will debut in America’s Thanksgiving Parade® presented by Gardner White. Five additional students were Honorable Mention winners, and

See **WINNING FLOAT DESIGN** Page B-2



Image courtesy of The Parade Company

Winning Float Design

From page B-1

their designs will appear on the float as it makes its way down Woodward Avenue on Thanksgiving morning.

Angelique Power, President and CEO of The Skillman Foundation, highlighted that tapping into young people's unique perspectives helps envision how communities can come together for the greater good.

"We're inspired by and proud of all the students who beautifully demonstrated the spirit behind the 'Better Together' theme," Power said.

The Skillman Foundation partnered with the Parade Company to invite students in grades 4-8 from Detroit public or charter schools to creatively illustrate the contest theme "Better Together."

Tony Michaels, President

and CEO of the Parade Company emphasizes working with a wonderful partner such as The Skillman Foundation and talented students to create a unique float is so special.

"Young people truly are our future and seeing their creativity on display on Woodward on Thanksgiving morning is a wonderful experience," Michaels said.

Harmony Henry's winning illustration centered on friendship and hope, depicting various young people coming together but creating their own stories. A backdrop of the earth, a rainbow, and two large hands coming together gave Parade Company artists the perfect canvas to create an inspiring float.

As the grand prize winner, Henry and a family member will ride on the float parade

2024 Skillman Foundation Float Design Contest Honorable Mention Winners

- **Kaiden Green**, "Vision of Detroit Together," sixth grade, University Prep Math & Science Middle School
- **Alexander Holloway**, "Holding Detroit Up," fourth grade, Edmonson Montessori
- **Miguel Mayes**, "Love Your Friends," fourth grade, University Prep Art & Design Elementary School
- **Neidaly Pacheco**, "W.B.T. (We Are Better Together)" fifth grade, Gardner Elementary School
- **Korey Ray**, "We Are Better Together," fifth grade, Madison-Carver Academy

on Thanksgiving, in addition to receiving accommodations at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center on the eve of the Parade and a free tour of The Parade Company followed by a pizza party for up to 10 guests.

Voted as America's Number One Holiday Parade by USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice Awards, the 98th America's Thanksgiving Parade® presented by Gardner White will continue to

awe generations of parade-goers on Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit with amazing floats, larger than life balloons towering the skyline, celebrities, famous clowns and Big Heads, marching bands and so much more.

The parade is broadcast live on WDIV Local 4 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and nationally to millions of viewers across 185 major cities in the U.S.

Preserve Black Legacy

From page B-1

man who served with honor. The unveiling was a significant moment for Brantley, Detroit, and the Jefferson family — a moment of remembrance, solidarity, and celebration of Black achievement.

When the statue was recently found, Brantley's team awaited details to assess its condition and discuss the next steps for restoration. The damage was extensive. The statue had been sawed off at the ankles, and the physical damage reflected a deeper wound. This defacement has sparked conversations about community responsibility, cultural preservation, and the importance of securing public art.

The city's response will determine more than just the restoration of a statue; it will also signal Detroit's commitment to protecting and uplifting Black cultural symbols. Brantley emphasizes that public art is not mere decoration; it's a powerful vehicle for storytelling, a way to connect the community to its past and inspire the next generation. "This is about honoring those who laid the groundwork for us to thrive. These artworks are our history books. They teach us about struggle, resilience, and the dignity that can never be taken away, no matter what," he states.

Even as Brantley plans for the statue's restoration, he is far from slowing down. His schedule is packed with new projects, each with its own powerful message. Among them is a public art installation at East Tennessee State University, dedicated to the first five Black students to integrate into the university. This work will honor the courage of these students who faced opposition with grace and determination. Another upcoming project, a sculpture for the City of Madison in Wisconsin, will stand as a testament to equality and progress, values that lie at the heart of Brantley's artistic mission.

Brantley, a self-taught sculptor from Detroit, discovered his talent as a high school junior. He credits his ceramics teacher for nurturing his passion for art and helping him mold beauty and history from clay. Within two years, he had already received recognition locally and across Michigan, leading him to pursue sculpting full-time in 2014. His work has since been exhibited in numerous solo and group shows nationwide, including his current 2024 exhibitions, "Galatea: Myth, Love, and Transformation" in Detroit and a joint exhibition at the Indy Art Center.

For Brantley, the theft of the Lt. Col. Jefferson statue is more than a single act of vandalism; it is a reminder of the challenges facing public art and the importance of community stewardship. His work stands as a call to action, urging communities to value and protect the visual stories that speak to our shared experiences and aspirations. As Detroit moves forward, the restoration of Jefferson's statue can be a powerful step toward reaffirming the city's commitment to preserving Black history and honoring the legacies that built it.

For now, Brantley and the Jefferson family wait. The community waits. But the spirit of Lt. Col. Jefferson, immortalized in Brantley's bronze and in the collective memory of Detroit, will remain unbroken.

The Rink at Campus Martius Park

From page B-1

which has a warm holiday atmosphere and festive energy.

The Rink serves as a focal point for holiday celebrations in downtown Detroit. Its accessibility and welcoming environment make it a destination for people of all ages and backgrounds. The laughter of skaters, the sparkle of holiday lights, and the warmth of shared moments create an experience that feels uniquely Detroit.

As the 2024-2025 season begins, The Rink continues to play a vital role in bringing the community together. It provides a space where people can celebrate the holidays in a way that feels both timeless and magical. From young children learning to skate to long-time visitors returning to the ice, every moment spent at The Rink becomes a cherished memory.

The Rink represents the best of what De-

troit has to offer during the holidays. It is a space where tradition meets the vibrancy of a growing city. Each year, it reminds Detroiters and visitors alike of the power of shared experiences to create connection and joy.

This season is an opportunity to honor what The Rink stands for. Supporting its nomination for USA Today's 10Best Readers' Choice Awards highlights the pride Detroiters feel for this beloved space. Each vote is a chance to celebrate its role in bringing joy to the community.

Whether visiting to skate or to soak in the holiday spirit, The Rink at Campus Martius Park offers an experience that is both festive and uniquely Detroit. As the season unfolds, The Rink continues to welcome everyone who wants to share in its magic. From opening weekend to the last skate of the season, it remains a cornerstone of holiday traditions in the heart of Detroit.

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Dining With Confidence

Program Protects Diners, Provides Job Advancement in Restaurant Industry

By Scott Benson
DETROIT CITY COUNCILMEMBER AND CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Earlier this year, the Detroit City Council approved an ordinance introduced by my office that created the Dining with Confidence placard program. My aim with this program is to protect diners by giving them an easy way to determine which dining establishments are in compliance with their city health inspections. The ordinance went into effect in October 2024 and is a quality-of-life priority of the Wealth Generation Task Force to keep our neighborhoods safe and healthy.



the commitment of the establishment to food safety.

The Dining with Confidence program uses the following placard rating system:

GREEN PLACARD (In Compliance): the establishment has no serious food safety violations and has a valid food service license.

RED PLACARD (Closed): posted if the establishment does not have a valid food service license, poses a serious health risk, or is in the final step of enforcement.

WHITE PLACARD (Temporary): If the establishment has corrections that are required, or is eligible for enforcement, they will be issued a white placard with information on the program and instructions in how to search inspection results online using the Health Department's Open Data Portal. A white placard is available on request by licensed food establishments currently in good standing that are awaiting their next routine scheduled inspection.

This transparency helps build trust between the restaurants and their customers. Detroit joins other large cities, such as New York City, Los Angeles and Toronto, in having a form of placards tied to health inspections. Providing customers with this information will also help Detroit attract new major events, such as the NFL Draft, by marketing the safety of our dining establishments.

The economic benefits of this program are plentiful. The placard program helps those restaurants who take food safety seriously by increasing business and boosting revenue through customer attraction and retention. Successful restaurants create jobs, pay taxes, and support the economy by purchasing goods and services from other local businesses. In fact, a study by American Express showed that 70 cents of every dollar spent at a local restaurant stays within the community.

Restaurants can empower communities, and Detroit is blessed with incredible restaurants representing the diversity of our city. The food scene here is loaded with culinary innovators and people who are working to preserve cultural ties through food. Food is something that can unite us and, in some neighborhoods, restaurants are community hubs where people gather over a meal to solve the problems of the world or simply enjoy the company. Restaurants can also help address food insecurity by working with local organizations to donate meals to those in need.

Keeping you safe from food-borne illnesses is only part of what Dining with Confidence does. The program, at the request of the restaurant owners, is establishing a food service worker training program that trains front-line employees and managers to improve our restaurant sector by focusing on customer service, food service and management education. This will provide Detroit restaurants with an additional edge over suburban restaurants when it comes to competing for customers.

Dining with Confidence represents a highly collaborative partnership between the city and our restaurants. It is not about just bad actors but assisting restaurants that are struggling to raise their standards. The free training programs that are part of this effort are open to all Detroit restaurants and will be offered in multiple languages. The placards also act as incentives to the restaurants by encouraging high standards.

The food service training program benefits small businesses by enhancing food safety knowledge and skills, reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses. Well-trained staff work more efficiently, improving productivity and lowering operational costs. By ensuring compliance with public health regulations, businesses avoid costly fines and penalties. Additionally, customers are more likely to return to restaurants with green placards, boosting customer satisfaction and repeat business. Finally, the program empowers employees by providing opportunities for job advancement and increased wages.

By investing in both public health and restaurant growth, Dining with Confidence strengthens the city's food scene, ensures Detroit remains a delicious and healthy place to eat, and increases revenues by attracting and expanding the customer base of restaurants. This is another example of why residency has its privileges.

Hon. Scott Benson is a Detroit City Councilman who represents the 3rd District on Detroit's north eastside. Councilman Benson is an Urban Planner by training with a long background in real estate and community development in Southeastern Michigan. Scott also serves his community by sitting on numerous boards, is an avid cyclist and a proud father.



The Amistad slave ship uprising: A 185-year-old story that must never be forgotten

By Donald James
SENIOR WRITER, REAL TIMES MEDIA

It's impossible to pinpoint, with accuracy, the number of slave ships that transported millions of captured Africans through the Middle Passage from the Motherland to the Americas between 1525 and 1866. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, considered a highly credible source, estimates at least 35,000 slave ships transported approximately 12.5 million Africans to the New World to be sold into slavery in North America, the Caribbean, and South America. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database estimates that more than two million kidnapped Africans didn't survive the treacherous Middle Passage journeys.

While the overwhelming majority of slave ships leaving Africa reached their destinations in the Americas, the most famous "non-deliverable voyage" of stolen Africans was the Amistad (La Amistad), which is Spanish for Friendship.

The story of the Amistad began in Sierra Leone, on the northwest coast of Africa, in February 1839 when 53 Africans were kidnapped and shipped to Havana, Cuba, as cargo. The Africans were then loaded onto the Amistad and transported to another Caribbean port to be sold into slavery. However, the 53 Africans had other plans.

Sengbe Pieh, a young tribal leader in his African homeland but named Joseph Cinque by Spanish slave traders, led a ferocious onboard uprising resulting in the deaths of most of the ship's crew members. Pieh and the Mende Africans were now in control of the Amistad.

The Africans forced the surviving crew members to navigate the Amistad back to Africa. The crew, however, steered the ship up the eastern coast of the United States, where the Amistad was intercepted off the coast of Long Island, New York, by a U.S. naval vessel. The Navy crew commandeered the Amistad and towed the schooner to New London, Connecticut. The Africans were imprisoned and charged with a litany of offenses, most notably the murders of most of the Amistad's Spanish crew members. It didn't look good for the Africans, who didn't speak English and were going to trial in a foreign land.

In actuality, there were two Amistad trials: one criminal and one civil. In the

criminal trial, the Mende Africans from Sierra Leone were charged with murder, mutiny, and piracy. The case was closely watched by slave industry benefactors from states, territories, and even other countries where slavery was legal. The trial was ultimately dismissed over jurisdiction when the presiding judge ruled that the court could not charge the Africans because alleged crimes happened on a Spanish ship in Spanish waters.

The second trial was civil and would determine whether the captured Africans were actually slaves and resolve any ownership issues. U.S. President Martin Van Buren, who was running for reelection, attempted to do a balancing act between giving in to the Spanish government's request to return the Africans to Cuba while supporting the American abolitionists who pushed for the Africans to be freed. Van Buren couldn't do both, eventually losing his presidential bid for reelection in 1840.

Former President John Quincy Adams, who opposed slavery, legally defended the 53 Africans and was vehemently against sending them back to Cuba to be punished. In defending the Amistad captives, Adams took the legal fight to the U.S. Supreme Court in February 1841, arguing that the Africans were illegally captured in Sierra Leone, wrongfully transported to Cuba, and unlawfully detained after being removed from the Amistad.

Adams painted the legal picture that the African slave trade industry in America was immoral and illegal on all fronts. He pushed for the Africans connected to the Amistad to be freed from prison in Connecticut and returned to their home country of Sierra Leone. To the surprise of many following the case, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed.

After legal appeals went nowhere, on November 25, 1841, slave abolitionists in America had raised enough money to pay for the surviving 35 Amistad captives to return to Sierra Leone as passengers, not cargo, aboard the ship Gentleman. Pieh (Joseph Cinque) was among the returnees. The Africans arrived in Sierra Leone in January 1842, almost three years after they were captured and removed from their African homeland.

While the victorious fate of the Africans of the Amistad was an aberration when compared to the plight of tens of thousands of other slave ships sailing

from the Motherland to the Americas, the story, for many, represents courage, resilience, and the inner desire to be free, even when against the odds.

In 1997, actress Debbie Allen produced and Steven Spielberg directed the film "Amistad." Allen, who graduated from Howard University in 1971, said in many interviews that she first heard of the Amistad story when she revisited the HBCU in 1978. Allen said she saw an issue of Howard University's Literary Arts Journal titled "Amistad" in the storied school's bookstore. Published by Charles F. Harris, founder of Howard University Press, Amistad, the publication contained essays written by noted Black scholars. It was in this book of essays that Allen read about the 1839 Amistad revolt for the first time.

"I felt robbed and cheated that I had never been taught about Amistad in school," Allen said in numerous interviews in 1997. "This is the most powerful story of our shared history. Freedom is the theme of our history, the legacy of our people, and the hope of the rest of the not-quite-free world."

When the movie debuted, the historical drama featured actors Djimon Hounsou, Morgan Freeman, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Anthony Hopkins, and Matthew McConaughey. The film was nominated for four Academy Awards in 1998, but "Best Picture" and "Best Director" were omitted. When Oscar Night was over and the Golden Statues were awarded, "Amistad" was turned away empty-handed.

Nevertheless, the Allen-produced epic movie had done - and continues to do - far more than many American history books, including Black history publications, to boldly tell the true three-year Amistad story (1839 - 1842) rooted in Black courage and resilience in the face of systemic oppression.

"The story of the Amistad is a reminder that Africans were not merely passive victims of enslavement but active resisters, asserting their right to freedom," Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, noted professor of Africology and African American Studies at Temple University, has said during speeches and lectures on the Amistad. "The Amistad captives' fight for their freedom is not just a tale of the past: it's a testament to the resilience of the human spirit to be free and a call to action for every generation."

Detroit Honors Horace L. Sheffield Jr.: A Visionary for Civil Rights and Labor Justice

By Ebony JJ Curry
SENIOR REPORTER

Detroit's Grand River Avenue will soon bear another symbol of resilience and progress as the city gathers to honor Horace L. Sheffield Jr., a lifelong advocate for labor rights and social justice. On November 13, 2024, the Detroit Association of Black Organizations (DABO) hosts a significant dual event: the unveiling of a secondary street sign in Sheffield's name and the groundbreaking of the Sheffield Center Complex. These milestones not only celebrate the legacy of a man who shaped Detroit's history but also pave the way for the city's continued growth.

Sheffield was born in Vienna, Georgia, in 1916, but Detroit became his home when his family moved there two years later. He grew up in the city's public schools before pursuing higher education at the Detroit Institute of Technology, Wayne State University, and the University of California at Los Angeles. His contributions to Detroit's labor movement began early. At 18, he started working at Ford Motor Company's Rouge Plant in Dearborn, Michigan. By 1941, he had become an integral part of the United Auto Workers (UAW), helping to organize workers and fight for fair treatment. That same year, he was instrumental in establishing the UAW Inter-Racial Committee, which addressed workplace discrimination long before such efforts were commonplace.

Sheffield's influence extended beyond his role as a union organizer. In 1943, he became the first executive secretary of the Michigan State CIO Civil Rights Committee, a position that solidified his reputation as a leader in the fight for racial equity. His advocacy contributed to landmark changes, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt's issuance of Executive Order 8802, which created the nation's first Fair Employment Practices Committee.

Sheffield's dedication to justice didn't stop at labor rights. He was a key figure in the civil rights movement, playing a pivotal role in connecting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with UAW President Walter Reuther in 1956. This meeting resulted in financial support from the UAW to help establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Sheffield's ability to unite labor and civil rights efforts underscored his commitment to systemic change.

Throughout his career, Sheffield used media as a tool for advocacy. He wrote a long-running column, As I See It, for the



Horace L. Sheffield Jr.

Michigan Chronicle and hosted radio and television programs that highlighted critical social issues. These platforms allowed him to reach a broader audience and solidify his role as a voice for the community.

The street sign honoring Sheffield serves as a reminder of his work and a call to action for future generations. It symbolizes his contributions to Detroit and his unwavering fight for justice, equity, and opportunity. The groundbreaking of the Sheffield Center Complex further exemplifies the continuation of his mission. Supported by a \$1 million grant from the State of Michigan, the complex will revitalize DABO's headquarters and the Dr. LaVonne Sheffield Bridge Center, providing essential resources such as job training, education, and health services.

This event brings together community leaders and advocates, including Judge Greg Mathis, Detroit City Council President Mary Sheffield, and Gary Torgow, Chairman of Huntington National Bank. Their involvement highlights the collaborative effort required to honor Sheffield's legacy and sustain his vision for a stronger, more equitable Detroit.

Rev. Horace L. Sheffield III, who leads DABO, reflects on his father's life and the importance of these events. "This is more than honoring my father's name," he said. "It's about building on his work and ensuring the tools for progress remain in place for generations to come."

Sheffield's legacy continues to inspire. As Detroit moves forward, his words—"Never have a Wall Street mentality in a blue-collar town"—resonate as a reminder to prioritize the needs of its working-class communities.

For Detroiters, this day is a reminder of the power of community and the strength of legacy. It's a call to action to not only celebrate but to continue the work that Horace Sheffield Jr. began. From the street sign that will stand as a testament to his contributions to the complex that promises to carry his vision forward, November 13, 2024, is a day of both reflection and progress.

The Detroit Association of Black Organizations is proving that honoring the past and building the future are not separate acts but intertwined responsibilities. As the city moves forward, it does so with the knowledge that its history is not just preserved—it is alive and guiding its path forward.



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