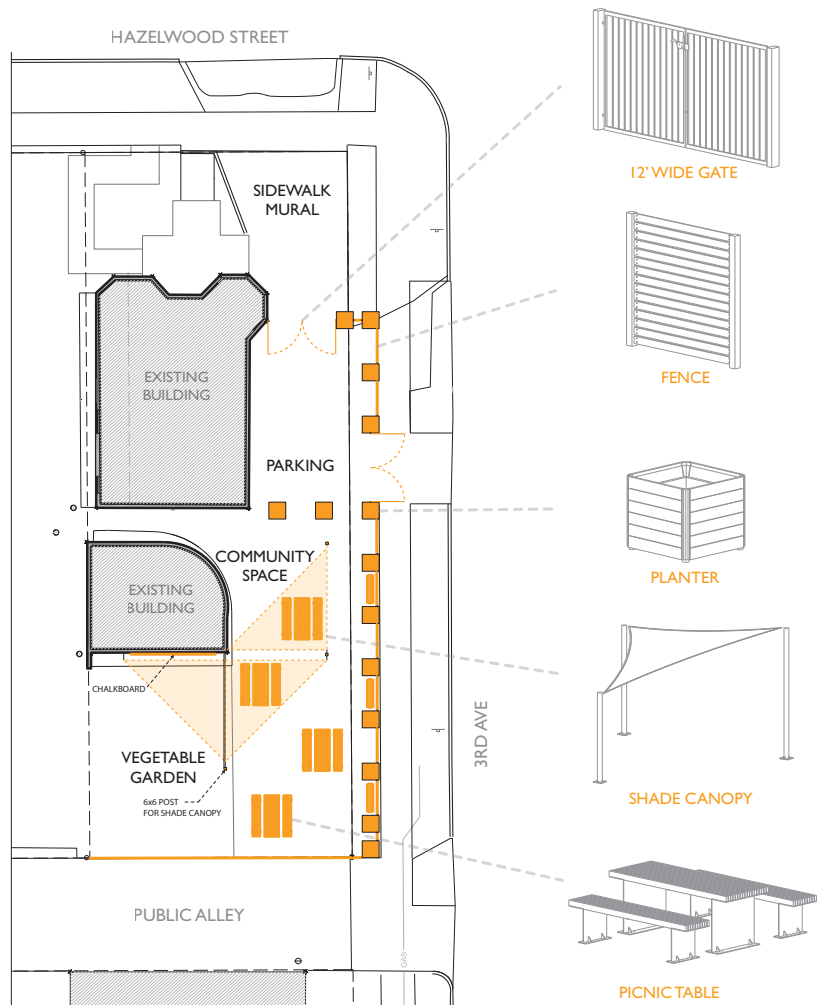
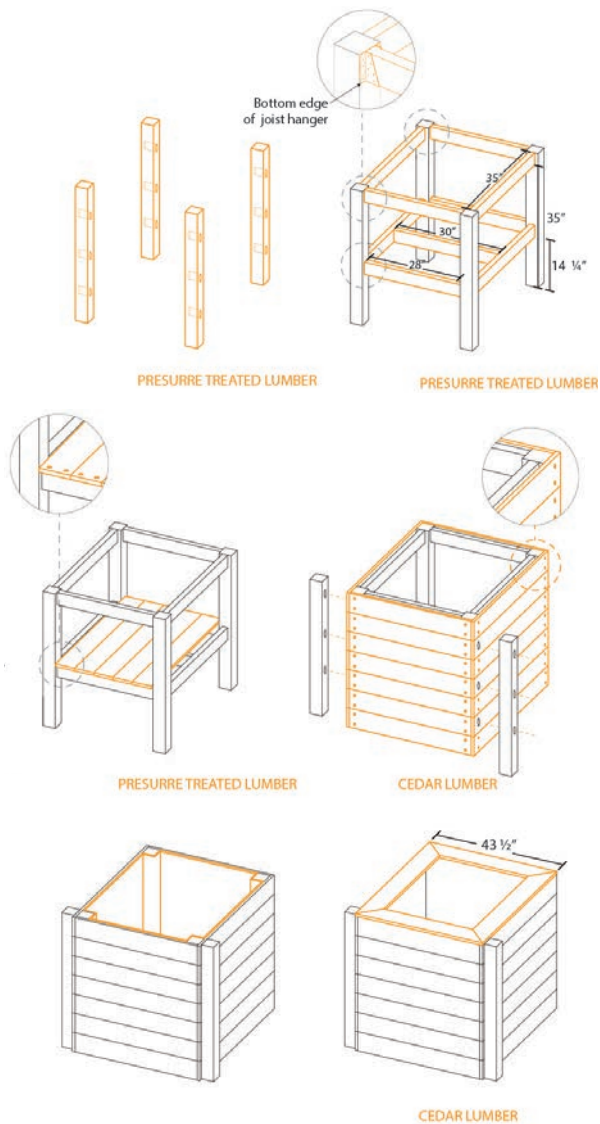


# 2021

## DETROIT COLLABORATIVE DESIGN CENTER Annual Report



# 02

## DIRECTORS' LETTER

In 2021 the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC) has continued to work with amazing community partners on a range of projects at the lot, building, corridor and neighborhood scale. Over the last year we have designed with over 30 partners and countless community members through safe and adaptive engagement events, both online and in person.

We also had the opportunity to launch two new programs to expand our work. Through the Grassroots Design Access program, we provided design services in collaboration with three community groups through a proposal process. We partnered with Universal Health and Wellness, Avalon Village and Liberated Farms to envision design futures for their projects. Look for the next call for applications early next year. Similarly, we joined the Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit process to provide pre-design services for five community placemaking projects, supporting partners in next steps to launch their design initiatives. Projects are detailed in this Annual Report.

This year also saw the construction of a new Reflection Garden designed by DCDC on the Detroit Mercy McNichols campus, completed in collaboration with University Ministry and Facility Operations. The garden provides a space for respite and reflection in light of the challenges we have encountered over the last two years.

DCDC also welcomed Detroit Mercy School of Architecture & Community Development student designers into our office in 2021. We are so thankful for their passion and commitment to the work of community-engaged design. In 2022 we are launching two new programs to expand access to public interest design training – a young professional fellowship and summer high school internship program. Stay tuned!



  
Ceara O'Leary

  
Christina Heximer

## OUR TEAM

### 2021 DCDC Staff

Josh Budiongan, Architect & Project Manager  
Charles Cross, Director of Landscape & Urban Design  
Toni Henry, Designer & Project Manager  
Christina Heximer, Co-Executive Director  
Julia Kowalski, Designer & Project Manager  
Brigette Murphy, Business Manager  
Ceara O'Leary, Co-Executive Director

### 2021 Visiting Designer

Chi Nhan (Ignatius) Nguyen

### 2021 Student Designers

Galal Abdullah  
Dana Anderson  
Connor Barbara  
Tiffany Dang  
Madison Girolamo  
Caris Heminger  
Deven Johnson  
Maria Jose  
Angela Lazarte  
Allison Yu



Josh Budiongan



Charles Cross



Toni Henry



Julia Kowalski

# 04

## HOW WE WORK

### Mission

The Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC) is a multi-disciplinary, nonprofit design center located in the University of Detroit Mercy's School of Architecture & Community Development. DCDC exists to bring high-quality and community-engaged design to all neighborhoods in Detroit. We do this by engaging, educating and promoting equity in design processes and outcomes.

### Vision

Every person has access to well designed, healthy spaces and neighborhoods and has an active role in the decision-making that impacts their community.

### Services

We work with community partners citywide on a range of projects at different scales, prioritizing participation in the planning and design process with the belief that local expertise leads to the best ideas.

Our services include:

- Architectural design
- Landscape design
- Urban design
- Neighborhood planning
- Infrastructure strategy
- Community engagement
- Capacity building
- Small scale installation design

### Our Office Values

- Meaningful, authentic engagement that celebrates local expertise
- Equitable spaces and sustainable solutions that prioritize quality design and access for everyone
- Collaboration built upon partnerships and relationships
- Celebrate histories, local culture, and stories of staff and partners
- Educating designers and supporting diversity in design professions
- Local capacity building
- Public interest design research and knowledge sharing
- Professional development and growth opportunities
- Healthy, mindful office culture
- Foster creativity, fun and playfulness

## TEACHING

### Co-op Program

Every semester DCDC hires two-to-four Detroit Mercy Architecture students who have a co-op work experience as part of their degree. Student designers work alongside DCDC staff learning about community-engaged design by doing. We consider this part of our teaching commitment within the school and for the next generation of community-engaged designers. Our 2021 student designers are listed on the previous pages.

### School of Architecture & Community Development (SACD) Curriculum

DCDC staff teaches Public Interest Design (PID) architecture studios in the School of Architecture & Community Development curriculum every year, focusing on a Detroit project with community and collaborative implications. We also teach in the core curriculum and in the Master of Community Development program.

Courses led by DCDC staff in 2021 included:

- Site Analysis + Design, Instructor Charles Cross, Fall 2021
- Master of Community Development Workshop Series, Coordinator Toni Henry, 2021

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## IN 2021 WE WORKED ON 30 PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS ACROSS DETROIT (AND BEYOND)

Twenty projects and initiatives completed in 2021 are included in the following pages, along with collaborating partners.

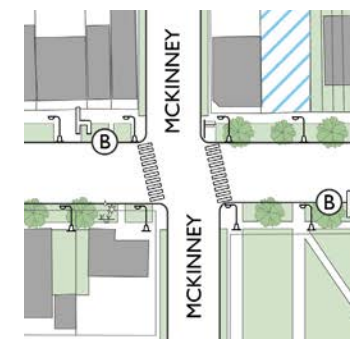
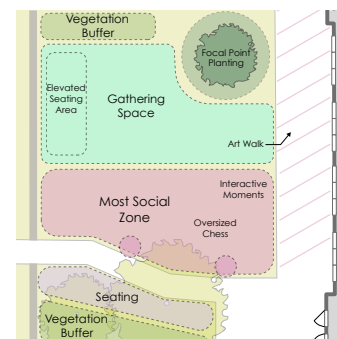
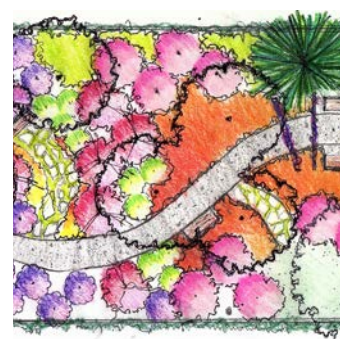
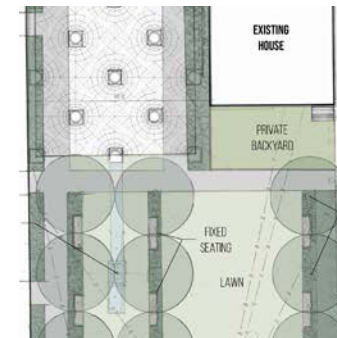
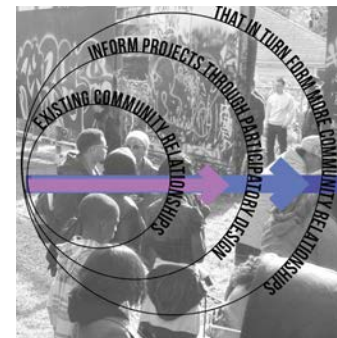
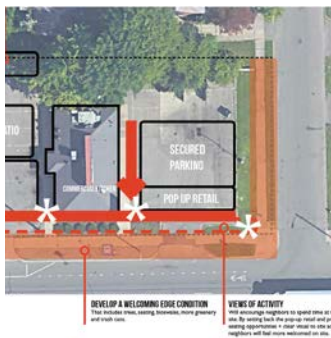
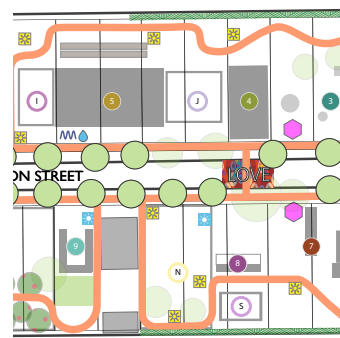
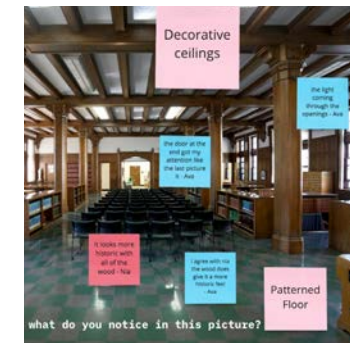
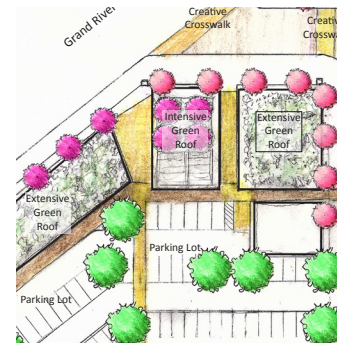
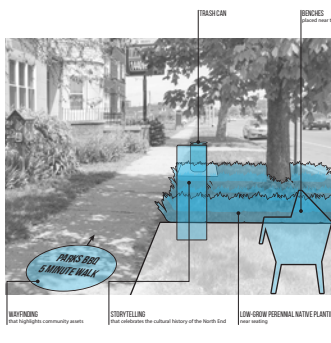
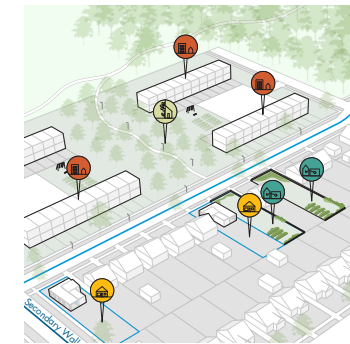
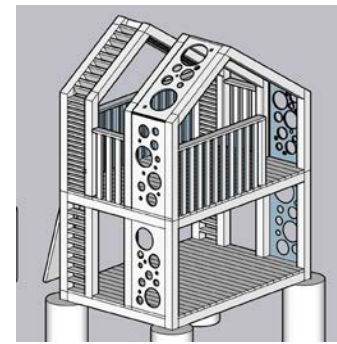
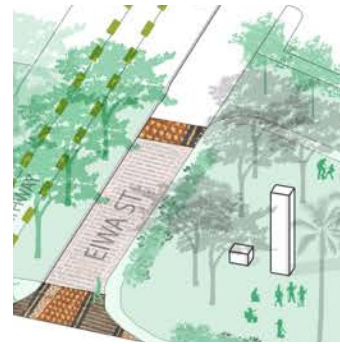
### THESE PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- Landscape design
- Urban design
- Architectural design
- Community engagement
- Capacity building

Among our projects, two 2021 initiatives are highlighted:

- Grassroots Design Access
- Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit Creative Placemaking Cohort Pre-Design Services

Our work would not be possible without our amazing community partners, who we work alongside. We deeply value our ongoing relationships and the trust that partners bring to the process.



## ARCHITECTURAL, LANDSCAPE + URBAN DESIGN

### Brilliant Detroit North Central 3rd Avenue Improvements

The 3rd Avenue Improvements transformed the space along 3rd Avenue into an asset. The front corner serves as a welcoming entrance to the Brilliant Detroit House with a mural and artwork. An enclosed community space adjacent to the house provides a place for families and children to gather. The design features modular planter boxes connected by a low fence that facilitates visual connection between the enclosed space and the sidewalk. Amenities in the enhanced space include a tensile shade structure, places for gathering, and expanded vegetable garden.

**Partner:** Brilliant Detroit

### Brilliant Detroit Brightmoor Treehouse

Brilliant Detroit works to bring resources to neighborhoods in the form of a community house and safe playspace. The Brightmoor house includes a side lot to be activated as a natural outdoor playspace that fosters a love for reading and multigenerational play. Youth shared extensive ideas about play structures for all ages and their families. Their ideas included places to do performances, build strong muscles in the form of exercise, yoga, and monkey bars. The signature pieces in this Brilliant Detroit project are a series of three play structures to support three age ranges and development skills with a consistent theme of play and fitness.

**Partners:** Brilliant Detroit, Jacob Longton, PE

### O'Hair Park Neighborhood + Housing Plan

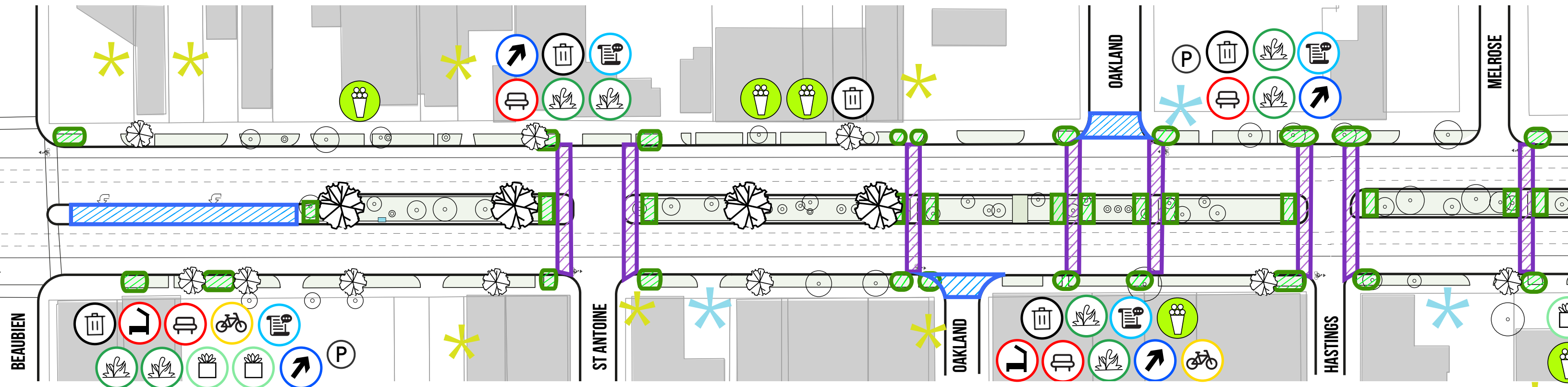
The O'Hair Park Neighborhood + Housing Plan focuses on improving the quality of life for existing residents through open spaces that are welcoming, beautiful and safe, and housing that is affordable and sustainable. The plan prioritizes methods by which new housing options can attract new residents to the O'Hair Park community. This document is OHPCA's comprehensive neighborhood plan. The plan outlines strategies to realize a vibrant, self-sustaining neighborhood that supports existing residents while also providing new, affordable housing options that create greater density and increased outdoor space. This project was led by a community-informed process, and delivers an analysis of the one-square mile area, housing, open space and mobility proposals, and the identification of pilot sites for new housing.

**Partners:** City Form Detroit, O'Hair Park Community Association

### East Grand Boulevard Streetscape Transformation Project

Vanguard Community Development Corporation received funding from the Knight Foundation to make streetscape improvements to East Grand Boulevard between Woodward Avenue and I-75 in the Historic North End Detroit neighborhood. The East Grand Boulevard Streetscape Transformation Project developed, with community insight and expertise, a vision and vibe for the boulevard. DCDC designed and facilitated a community engagement process and schematic streetscape design. The design strategies were informed directly by community input and include the location and type of streetscape amenities such as: plantings, streetscape furniture, arts and culture elements, and signage on the boulevard.

**Partners:** Vanguard CDC, Know Allegiance Nation, Good Done Daily, Spackman Mossop Michaels

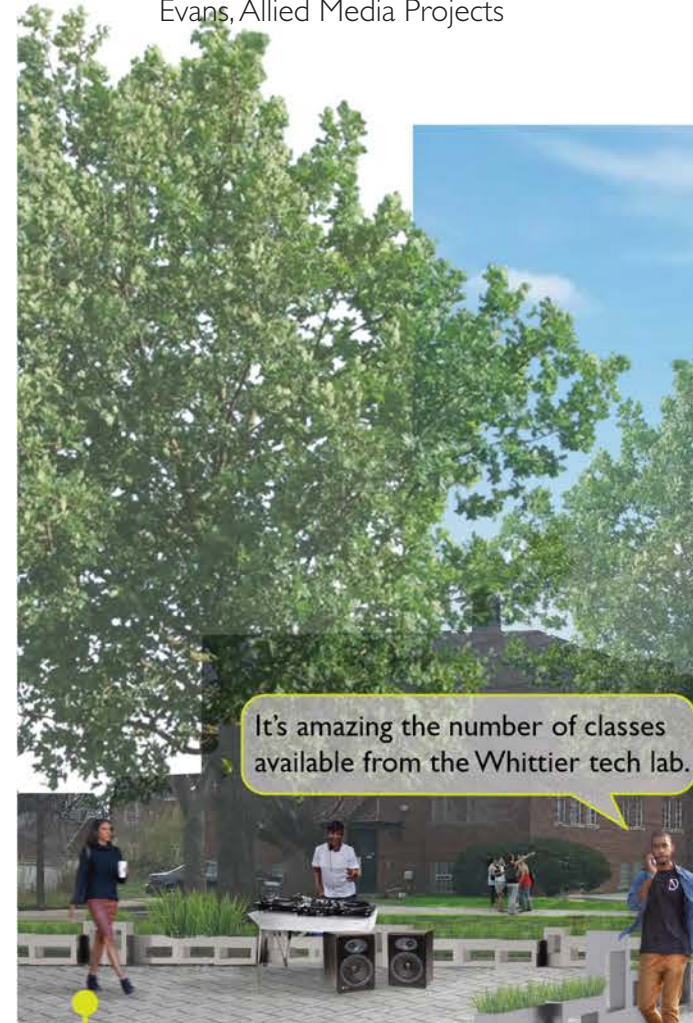


Snapshot of the East Grand Boulevard Streetscape Schematic Design

## Love Building & Campus

DCDC assisted in early phases of research, analysis and conceptual sketch development for the Love Campus in Core City. The campus will be the home of Allied Media Projects and several justice oriented organizations, a deli and a multi-purpose room for community events/meetings. A key component of the project is a pocket park with an amphitheater for social, cultural and mission based events.

**Partners:** Designing Justice Designing Spaces, Quinn Evans, Allied Media Projects



## Mayors' Institute for City Design (MICD) Hawai'i Design Tank

DCDC participated in the MICD Design Tank organized by the University of Hawai'i Community Design Center, contributing ideas for the design of public open spaces to support visual and performing arts and more vibrant, healthy, and active uses of sidewalks, streets, parks, parking spaces, and other underutilized outdoor spaces in Kaua'i.

**Partner:** University of Hawai'i Community Design Center, Mayors' Institute for City Design

PUBLIC PLAZAS PROVIDE A PLACE FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY AND GATHER WITH NEIGHBORS.

The work of Great Communities Now has been really transformative for the Whittier commercial corridor and community.

It's encouraging to show our kids black owned businesses in our neighbourhood.

HAVING PLACES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO SHOP AND DINE INCREASES PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC, MAKING THE CORRIDOR SAFER AND CREATING SYNERGIES FOR ECONOMIC STRENGTH.

PARKING AREAS CAN BE MULTI-FUNCTIONING BY SUPPORTING FARMER'S MARKETS AND ENTERTAINMENT OPPORTUNITIES

RAIN GARDENS PLANTED WITH NATIVE PLANTS HELP MANAGE STORMWATER, AID POLLINATORS, AND ARE BEAUTIFUL.

CROSSWALKS AND MURALS ARE A WAY TO CELEBRATE LOCAL CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND ARTISTS.

WELL SUPPORTED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES

## Kentucky Street Lots

Marygrove Community Association (MCA) partnered with DCDC to do a community-engaged design process for three vacant lots on Kentucky Street. This project will beautify the neighborhood and provide a relaxing community gathering place. Defined by community input, these lots will provide a gathering space on the lawn and under the pavilion, benches, mounds for children to play on, and native perennial plantings that are colorful and inviting. The landscape design will be implemented with generous support from TCF Bank.

**Partner:** Marygrove Community Association

## Redeem Detroit Whittier Corridor Rendering

Redeem Detroit is a non-profit organization with the mission "to revitalize neighborhoods in the city of Detroit." Redeem Detroit is part of the team working on the Whittier Enhancement Project, which aims to enhance the Denby neighborhood's business, residential, and wellness corridors. This rendering aims to illustrate the future vision for the Whittier corridor.

**Partners:** Redeem Detroit, Great Communities Now, Martin Evers MBC, Smith Wilson Group and Bridgewater CDC

Whittier Corridor Rendering



The Whittier Corridor was the best place for me to launch my business.

# 12

## GRASSROOTS DESIGN ACCESS

Over the course of 2021, DCDC launched a pilot “Grassroots Design Access” program supported with funding from The Kresge Foundation. This program provides community-engaged design services to community organizations with limited capacity and access to funding. The process began with a call for proposals in early 2021. The application review included DCDC staff and community partners who contributed a variety of on the ground perspectives to the review process. Three groups were selected to receive Grassroots Design Access design services following further discussion and defining of needs.

The three projects in the inaugural Grassroots Design Access cohort center community healing and restorative community design and development.

### Avalon Village Block Conceptual Design Strategy

DCDC worked with Mama Shu and members of the community to develop a conceptual block design for the vision of what is to come in Avalon Village. DCDC facilitated community expert meetings to determine priority areas for the design of connective elements within the neighborhood. The process resulted in a block design that includes a welcoming arch, green sound buffering alleys, art alleys, walking path, traffic calming tables, more green elements like street and fruit trees, and additional educational elements for the children of Avalon Village, as well as future spaces to connect seamlessly within the existing elements. DCDC worked to maintain the love, safety, and spirituality that the community feels while visiting Avalon Village.

**Partner:** Avalon Village

### Hitha Healing House and Garden Conceptual Design

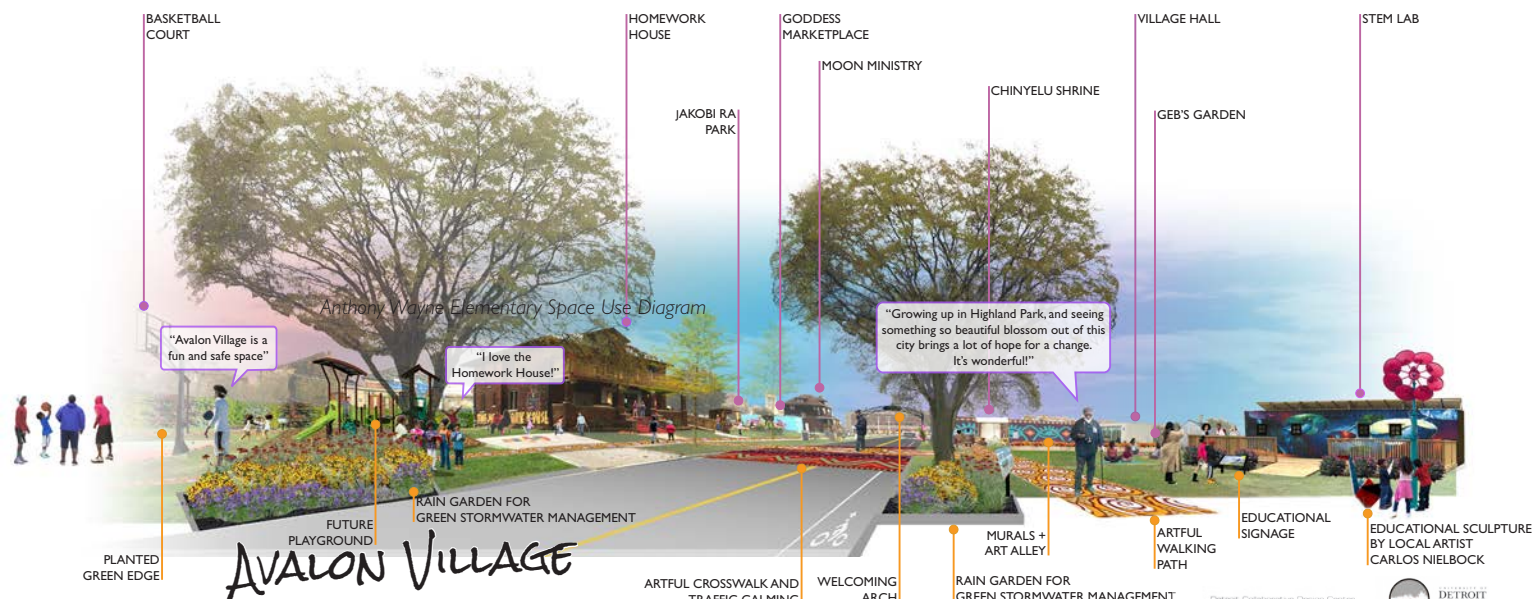
Hitha Healing House and Garden will provide spaces that support Universal Health and Wellness’s mission to improve the quality of life through programs that heal, empower and transform. These programs are focused on promoting sisterhood for women and young girls and supporting the healthy development and awareness for individuals to heal holistically and cultivate the well-being of the whole person; mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The Hitha House will include spaces for group connection, healing and reflection as well as spaces for individual healing and reflection. The Hitha Garden will connect the interior space to the outdoors incorporating native, colorful and aromatic plants. The garden will include spaces for groups to gather and connect while also providing quiet places in the landscape for individual retreat and reflection. DCDC worked with Universal Health and Wellness to define an interior and garden conceptual design, incorporating ideas generated from focus groups.

**Partner:** Universal Health and Wellness

### Liberated Farms Community Garden & Outdoor Space Conceptual Design

Liberated Farms is a grassroots community program that works with youth to build a vision for themselves as community leaders and entrepreneurs. Everything Liberated Farms does is built on the belief that representation is vital for encouragement and building interest within youth. Liberated Farms is improving lots east of the former State Fair Grounds site in Detroit. The vision for the corner lots is to create a produce garden and community gathering and entertainment space on the north side of the lots. DCDC worked with Liberated Farms and youth in their orbit to develop ideas for the community garden and outdoor space, resulting in an overall conceptual design and a rendering for the three lots, informed by youth workshops.

**Partner:** Liberated Farms



Avalon Village Rendering



Hitha House Garden Rendering



Liberated Farms Rendering

# 14

## KRESGE INNOVATIVE PROJECTS: DETROIT

In partnership with The Kresge Foundation and Michigan Community Resources, DCDC provided pre-design support services to five community partners as part of a “creative placemaking cohort” among the Round 6 KIP:D grantees. This inaugural technical assistance scope of work helped propel place-based projects in their initial stages of design and development and support groups in site selection and design, program development and layout, designer selection, and community engagement to inform design. This goal was to increase partner capacity to work with designers and undertake a community engaged design process for their creative placemaking projects.

### American Riad

American Riad is a collaborative creative endeavor that “will use public art and architecture to link diverse cultures and build resilient communities.” DCDC worked with the American Riad team to define and produce community-engaged design strategies and develop a resulting space use diagram informing future design and programmatic layout uniting the different spaces that make up the project. DCDC’s work with the team in ongoing in the form of additional landscape design.

**Partners:** North End Woodward Community Land Trust, Ghana Think Tank, Oakland Avenue Artists Coalition

### The Yunion

The Yunion received KIP:D funding “to enrich the services and programming they provide the Oakman Community Hub by installing a performing arts studio, computer lab, and a wellness center.” DCDC advised on community engaged design strategies for virtual community meetings, and the process by which to analyze the outcomes of the strategies so that they are directly reflected in the design. DCDC also supported engagement facilitation, identified precedent images for the outdoor community space adjacent to the building, and developed a space use diagram for the outdoor community space adjacent to the building.

### Heritage Works

Heritage Works received KIP:D funding “to complete a community planning process around cultural amenities in North Corktown.” DCDC assisted with evaluating potential sites for the planned NoCo Cultural Center including the development of develop a list of priorities/criteria to evaluate sites, researching and analyzing zoning, parking requirements and setbacks for the potential sites to determine if the site size will accommodate the center.

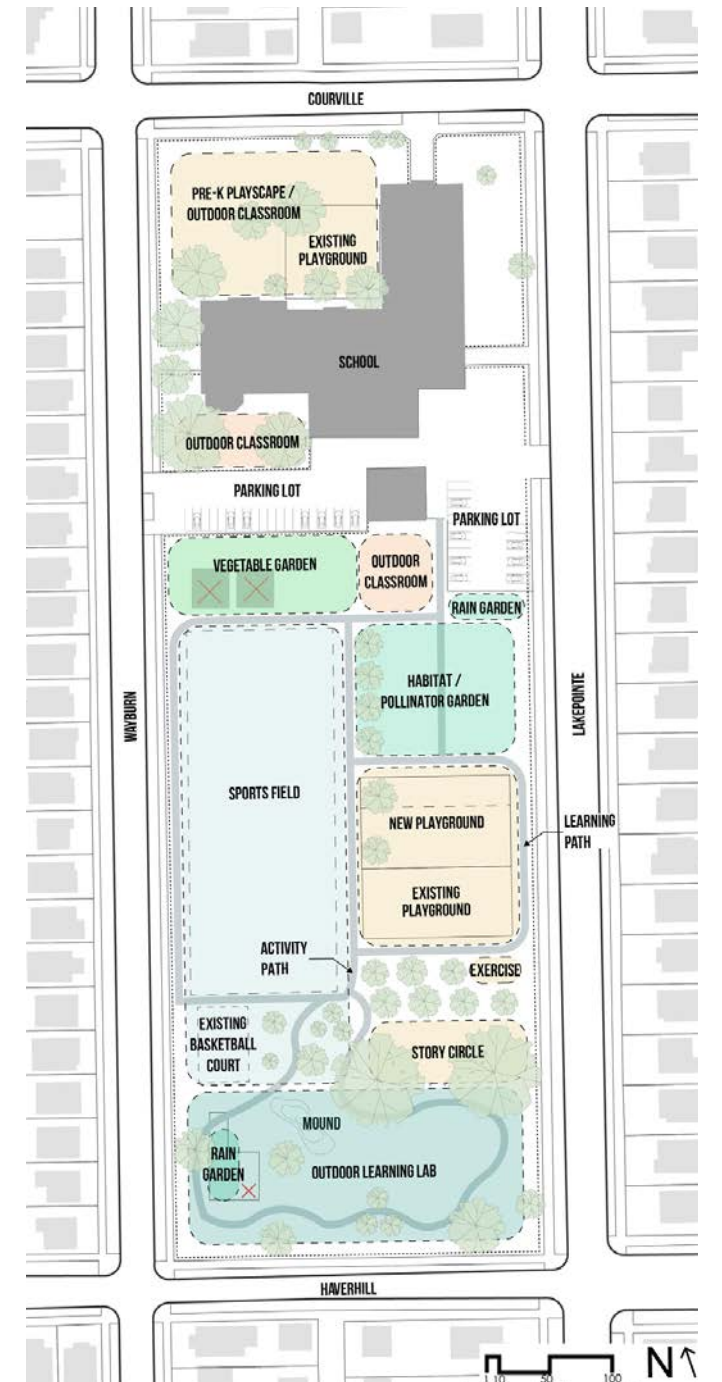
### Great Communities Now

Great Communities Now received funding from the Kresge Foundation to support the “Whittier Enhancement Project, which aims to enhance the Denby neighborhood’s business, residential, and wellness corridors.” DCDC’s support for this multi-partner effort included multiple elements: support for a community-engaged design strategy; identifying amenity locations and recommendations for the Whittier corridor; collecting precedents for facade design; and space use diagrams for Anthony Wayne Elementary and the Whittier Community Building.

**Other Partners:** Redeem Detroit, Martin Evers MBC, Smith Wilson Group, Bridgewater CDC, Anthony Wayne Elementary

### Mt. Olivet Neighborhood Watch

Mt. Olivet Neighborhood Watch received KIP:D funding to support “a series of planning and community engagement activities focused on the expansion and development of a hoop house and rainwater garden.” DCDC supported Mt. Olivet Neighborhood Watch by identifying precedents and examples of construction for various elements of Fletcher Park and the two-block path to the park including fences from reclaimed materials, planters, benches, historical signage and fruit trees. DCDC also advised on how these elements could contribute to a cohesive landscape design, resulting in a site plan layout.



Anthony Wayne Elementary Space Use Diagram



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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + CAPACITY BUILDING

### E. Warren Business Accelerator Engagement

The East Warren Development Corporation (EWDC), a nonprofit organization working to support and enhance the E. Warren commercial corridor and adjacent neighborhoods through collaboration, community engagement, and equitable development, partnered with DCDC to compile and analyze engagement data that will inform the programming and design of the lot at 16835 East Warren Avenue. DCDC compiled data in a What We Heard Document and diagram, which communicated community priorities to the design team.

**Partner:** East Warren Development Corporation

### The Avis & Elsmere Project: A Community-Engaged Design Tool

This engagement tool is both a story-telling device for the Avis and Elsmere project and communicates the values and strategies that drive participatory design and community organizing work. The following webpage brings to life all the layers of a community-engaged design project: from pedagogy, to values, to community voices, and tactics. Though the overall outline describes principles, then strategies, and tactics, there are also anecdotes from on-the-ground experience along the way.

<https://www.insidesouthwest.com/participatory-design-educational-tool>

**Partners:** Inside Southwest Detroit

### P-20 Marygrove Conservancy Engagement

Over the past year, we have continued to work with Marygrove Conservancy staff and P-20 partners to support community engagement efforts both internally and externally. This has consisted of ongoing participation in the communications and community engagement working groups, regular meetings with Marygrove Conservancy leadership, the formation and implementation of the Marygrove Youth Advisory Council, P20 partner planning for institutionalized engagement practices, participation in monthly neighborhood coordination meetings, and support for Marygrove staff to increase community engagement plans, structures and staffing.

**Partners:** Marygrove Conservancy, P-20 Partnership

### HomeBase Design Stories

With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, DCDC and Live6 Alliance are embarking on a series of events hosted in and around Neighborhood HomeBase that celebrate local design, culture and the arts. Activities will include theatre, cinema, architecture and the legacy of McNichols businesses. The first installment partnered with Noir Design Parti to showcase the work and history of Detroit's Black architects via an indoor and outdoor exhibit and panel discussion with Black architects and developers contributing to the future of McNichols.

**Partner:** Live6 Alliance, Noir Design Parti

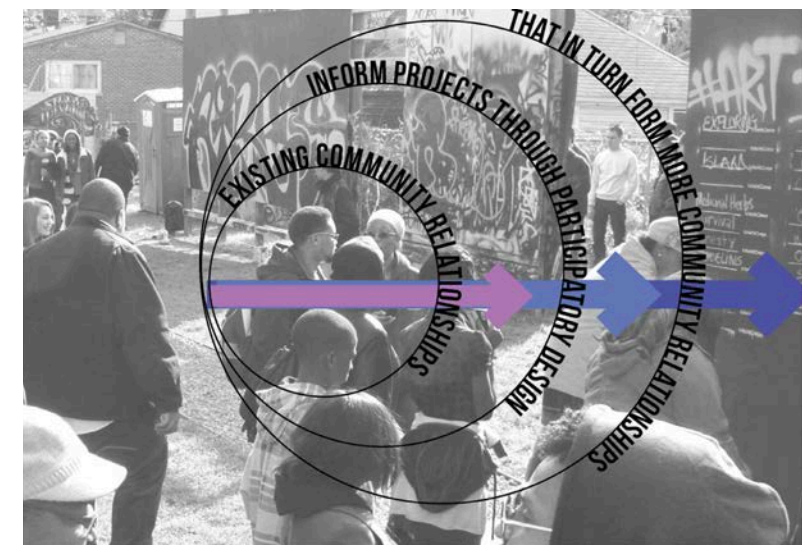
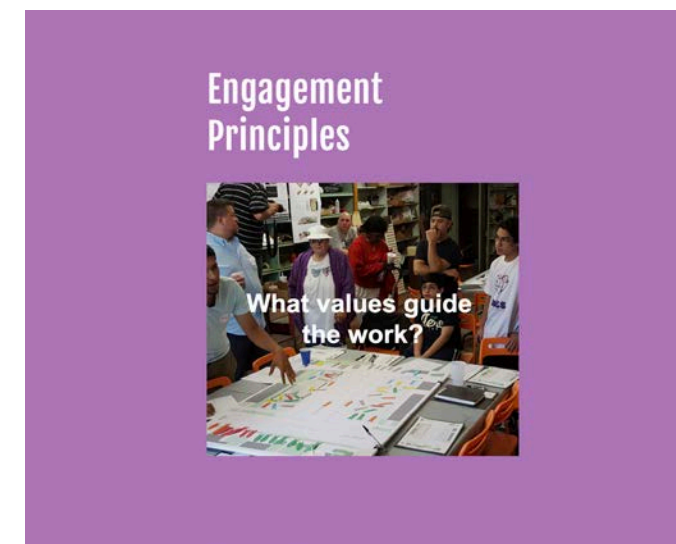


Screenshots from the The Avis & Elsmere Project: A Community-Engaged Design Tool

### Principle #1: Engagement is building relationships

Relationships include evolving and ongoing connections with neighbors, residents and partners. Importantly, community engagement is not transactional. For ISWD, human capital is valued equally to economic capital. Existing community relationships were leveraged to bring more diverse voices to the table.

**"You need to have relationships or at least some foundation of relationships to facilitate quality engagement, but at the same time, a good engagement process can help to facilitate the relationship itself. They really feed into each other...It's reciprocal...You need one to have the other...And they build on one another." - Erik**



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## KNOWLEDGE SHARING

### **Presentations, Lectures + Panel Discussions**

NOMAS St. Louis - NOMA Competition Studio Detroit Advisor/Lecturer, September 2021.  
Design Core Detroit x DMU - Anti-Racist Design Justice Workshop + Conversation, July 2021.

RPI: Entrepreneurship and Architecture, Virtual Guest Lecture (Dark Matter University) w/Siboney Díaz-Sánchez, March 2021.

"The Why + How of Community-Engaged Design – A story of the Avis and Elsmere Renovation," Environmental Design Research Association, Just Environments: Transdisciplinary Border Crossing, Detroit, MI, May 2021.

Challenge Detroit, Community Engagement Principles + Best Practices, September 2021.

National Organization of Minority Architects Conference, The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History: Designing & making a holistic green museum, October 2021.

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History Treeposium, September 2021.

Michigan ASLA Conference on Landscape Architecture: Designing with the Grain, The Radicalized Landscape, Climate Change and the Black Community-September 2021.

Manresa Jesuit Retreat Center, Fitzgerald Community Development-August 2021.

New Jersey ASLA Conference, Detroit Collaborative Design Center: Engaging Youth for Equitable Outcomes-January 2021.

"Pedagogies for Designing Spatial Justice," Symposium with University of Oregon Spatial Justice Fellows, Environmental Design Research Association, EDRA52 Conference, May 2021, invited moderator.

"Scaling Community Open Space: Lessons for Leveraging Vacant Land." Environmental Design Research Association, EDRA52 Conference, May 2021.

"Collaborative Community Practice: Evaluating Partnerships and Pedagogy." Expanding the View: 109th Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Annual Meeting, April 2021.

### **Papers:**

Ceara O'Leary, "Collaborative Community Practice: Evaluating Partnerships and Pedagogy." Expanding the View: 109th Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Annual Meeting, 2021.

"Towards a More Connected Field of Community Development Education: Encouraging Community Well-Being Through an Engaged Symposium." Stanard, V., Hains, K., Knobloch, N., O'Leary, C., Reinhard, A., Hains, B., & Rios, M. International Journal of Community Well-Being, 2021.

### **Publications featuring DCDC and partner work:**

[Model D](#)

[Next City](#)

[Second Wave Media](#)

### **Boards and Committees:**

Association for Community Design - Board Member

Keep Growing Detroit - Board Treasurer

Design As Protest Collective - Core Organizer

Dark Matter University - Organizer, Instructor

NOMA Detroit/National Member

AIA Detroit/National Member

Design Future Leadership Forum, Faculty + Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Cohort Faculty

Fulbright-Hays Fellow

American Society of Landscape Architects- Member

Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects-Member,

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Legacy Cities Community of Practice-Faculty

Black Landscape Architects Network-Member and Founding Board Member

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History Community Advisory Council-Member

Landscape Architecture Foundation Scholarship for Inclusive Community Design, Panelist

National Endowment for the Arts, Our Town Program-Panelist

Dunamis Community Development Corporation-Board Member

National Organization of Minority Architecture Students (NOMAS)-Faculty Advisor

Denby Neighborhood Alliance-Advisory Committee

Mayor's Institute on City Design-Hawaii Design Think Tank

University of Detroit Mercy Master of Community Development Advisory Board

AIA Housing Knowledge Community Advisory Group

Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellowship Selection Committee

ACSA 110th Annual Meeting Expanding the View, Reviewer

University of Detroit Mercy Strategic Planning Implementation Committee

Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision, Board Member

University of Detroit Mercy Presidential Search Committee Faculty Committee

School of Architecture + Community Development Lecture Committee

American Institute of Architects (AIA) Equitable Development Resource Advisory Panel

United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Racial Equity Fund Workgroup

Mayors Innovation Project + AIA Blueprint For Better Eastpointe Mayor's Innovation Project

American Institute of Architects Housing Awards, Jury Chair

Inside Southwest Detroit, Board Member

# THANK YOU!

## Funding Partners

We are also thankful for a funding community that supports our work and that of our community partners. We consider our funding partners as thought partners and allies in this work. In 2021, direct foundation support was provided by:



FORD  
FOUNDATION

NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT for the ARTS  
arts.gov



W.K.  
KELLOGG  
FOUNDATION\*



FORD MOTOR COMPANY FUND

## THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

Private donations were provided by:

Mark Farlow

Stephanie Harbin

Anonymous

Ronald L. Grzesiak

Catie & Dennis O'Leary

To donate, visit: <https://www.udmercy.edu/giving/donate/>  
Select "Detroit Collaborative Design Center" as the "Designation"

*Cover image: Brilliant Detroit North Central 3rd Avenue Improvements*



Detroit  
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**AC**  
**D**

## Detroit Collaborative Design Center

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University of Detroit Mercy

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Instagram **@dcdc\_udm**