What’s Next?

Join us as we work to improve quality of life in #SwDetroit!

#SwDetroit will be ready for the developments happening in our neighborhood. Our residents will be prepared to take advantage of all of the opportunity that comes from this. With your help, CoC's work will continue, stronger and more sustainable than before.

A targeted campaign that we continue to organize around is the systemic change in public education. With our Education Alliance, we are working on our Chronic Absences Campaign in which we seek to create a city-wide message of the importance of kids not missing more than 10 days of school a year: excused or unexcused.

We are unique because of our diversity, culture, complexity and proximity to an international border. We will leverage these strengths as we organize, lift our voices, and build power to bring high level jobs and environmental protection to our neighborhoods.

We have learned lessons from our work mobilizing #SwDetroit and are ready to share our model with other communities across the city, and across our nation.

Acknowledgements

Safety Alliance: Detroit Police Department, District 6 Detroit Neighborhood Police Officers, Mayor Mike Duggan's Office of Neighborhoods, Springdale Woodmere Block Club, Urban Neighborhood Initiative, Federal Bureau Of Investigation (FBI), Detroit Southwest Pride, Detroiters Helping Each Other, Detroit Southwest Essential Element Team (DSWEEP), Southwest Detroit Business Association, Americorp Urban Safety Initiative (AMUS), West Vernor Civilian Patrol Group, Office of Wayne County Rep. Ilona Varga, Crime Stoppers, Detroit Department of Transportation (D-DOT), Detroit Public Schools Police.


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Impact Statement

Congress of Communities (CoC)
Southwest Detroit Neighborhoods

Community Goal
Connecting Communities & Launching Leaders

“Congress of Communities was the first club I joined. That helped me open up - then I was able to join more clubs at my school because I wasn't scared. I just loved it and couldn't stop!”

Youth Leader

Over 10,000 residents, youth and stakeholders participated in a 3-year planning process that led to the creation of Congress of Communities (CoC). CoC is the resident-led organizing and advocacy agency in #SwDetroit that works to facilitate solutions around the chaos that's plaguing our neighborhoods. Our work is focused on making positive changes in Education, Safety, Workforce Development, and Youth Opportunity. Through the downfall of Detroit in 2008, #SwDetroit's voice was at the table helping Detroit solve its problems. We fought for our schools to be open, we created accountability for charter schools, and decreased crime. CoC was a pivotal force at the right time. Today, the power of our leaders is greater than ever. Over 300 parents, youth, and residents are change agents in our community - meeting with legislators in Lansing and City Council and forming spin-off organizations that get things done. We are "Community Empowered!"

Maria Salinas, Executive Director

Our Mission:
The mission of CoC of Southwest Detroit Neighborhood is to provide leadership and facilitate collaboration of residents, youth, and stakeholders to foster a vibrant and sustainable community.
Our Impact

When We Get Together, Change Happens!

Safety Alliance

Since 2010, a group of residents, youth, and police meet monthly to problem-solve neighborhood safety issues.

- #SwDetroit residents created safer neighborhoods by changing their attitudes and habits towards safety. In partnership with Detroit Southwest Pride, Peace Marches mobilized 100’s of residents each year to protest violence.
- Since 2013, the West Vernor Patrol group activated 20 Safety Patrol members.
- Facilitated creation of Detroit’s first resident-led Safety Hub in 2016.

"I have connected and met with others to come together in unity. Our teamwork makes the dream work."

- Adult Leader
- decrease in crime between 2008-2015 in #SwDetroit
- 42%

Education Alliance

Since 2012, the Education Alliance convenes parents and community stakeholders to collaborate on ways to improve education in the following ways:

Support for bilingual staff in schools

- Created a system for opening, closing, and transitioning schools.
- 150 schools impacted
- 150 students transitioned out of closing Phoenix Academy
- 482 Forward, a citywide education organizing entity, organized 43 parents & youth in Lansing to address damaging education bills (2016)
- The Say & Play Initiative engaged over 140 Early Head Start centers.
- Seyder’s Pathway to Potential program placed DHS social workers in 10 schools and cleared abandoned houses within 5 blocks of these schools

A Seat at the Table

Let’s Talk is a collaborative forum on the changes in our neighborhoods focused on promoting communication and building trust.

- Concerned a resident and stakeholder table to strategize on how to repurpose a closed school building
- Youth-organized “Listen Up” forum engaged 60 youth and 40 community leaders to share feelings about a violent youth shooting.
- Each follow up meeting engaged over 20 residents to educate the community about Community Land Trusts and strategies to fight for Community Benefit Agreements
- First forum engaged over 150 residents across #SwDetroit to break down barriers, bring people together, and discuss gentrification

Uplifting Resident Voice Through Leadership Development

Taking Action Por Nuestros Niños (TANN)

is an organized task force of resident leaders who partner with schools and parents to improve safety and education for our youth.

- 30 Spanish-speaking parents engaged
- 50 abandoned houses cleared since 2014
- 22 TANN members supported in obtaining legal citizenship status
- "Youth need an adult to help push them and make sure their voices are being heard. That's what you need. Strong adult allies that will really promote youth voice."

- Youth Leader

Youth Council

has trained and supported Latino youth, ages 13-18, to become confident future leaders of #SwDetroit.

- 150 youth attended Annual Youth Summit from 2010-2015
- 20 youth connected to career-focused jobs each summer
- Youth-organized tours with Detroit City Council and national foundations showcase youth-driven work and youth perspectives on Detroit. Engagement:

Policy Advocacy & Activism

We have advocated for community benefits around new developments in #SwDetroit to guarantee jobs for our residents. Our resident leaders have been able to influence and negotiate with partners who attempt economic and industrial developments. For example, in partnership with DDOT, we added a second bus to the Vernor Bus line (2015). We also travel to Lansing to fight Anti-Community Benefits bills that would prevent our residents from making key decisions for their neighborhoods.

2006

#SwDetroit named “Skillman Good Neighborhood”

2007

Residents plan, organize, and mobilize for change

2010

Congress of Communities formed

Residents activated through leadership training/task forces

2014

CoC makes change happen

Political and educational wins help stabilize neighborhood condition

Spin-off organizations improve conditions

2016

Safety Hub

Organizing, engagement, advocacy continue

Resident power increases

Neighborhood conditions improve

CoC model ready for replication

Our Kids, Our Schools, Our Voice: Issues for Detroit Residents