

## Detroit Assembles International Design Team to Help Revitalize Gratiot/7 Mile Area

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*Detroit has assembled an international design and planning team to help revitalize its Gratiot/7 Mile community. // Photograph by Noah Stephens*

The city of Detroit plans to revitalize the Gratiot/7 Mile area through a new neighborhood framework plan that will implement investment from the city's \$130-million Strategic Neighborhood Fund, which is working across 10 neighborhoods.

The effort at Gratiot/7 Mile will be led by Detroit's Giffels Webster, a civil engineering and community planning firm, and SLA, a Danish architecture and urban planning company. Consultants will include Utile, an architecture and planning firm in Boston; Community Development Advocates of Detroit; HR&A Advisors, a real estate, economic development, and program design and implementation firm; and Noah Stephens Photography to address the social and urban challenges of the community.

The team is developing the framework for the 3.4-square-mile area on Detroit's northeast side.

The plan includes the Regent Park, Mohican Regent, Mapleridge, and Franklin neighborhoods and is seeking resident input on projects that will enhance parks, streetscapes, and commercial and multifamily development.

The team has started virtual community meetings, and the project is continuing despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

“With the continuous involvement of and co-creation with neighborhood residents the city intends to build on the future dreams and needs of the community,” says Katy Trudeau, deputy director of the city of Detroit’s Planning and Development Department. “This crisis has shown the importance of thinking through how our neighborhoods and public realms meet and exceed the needs of all residents by creating safe, healthy, and functioning spaces for everyone.”

The community faces challenges including poverty, vacant housing, derelict public spaces, ecologic scarcity, and crime. The city issued a request for proposals for a team to help craft a neighborhood framework plan that will guide the investments of the Strategic Neighborhood Fund. The team’s goal is to create a holistic planning approach in close collaboration with residents, youth, business owners, community groups, city officials, and others. About 10,000 people live in the area.

“The Gratiot/7 Mile neighborhood has many challenges, but it also contains many opportunities and potential to reinvent itself as a well-functioning community,” says Rasmus Astrup, design principal and partner at SLA. “Drawing on our team’s joint Scandinavian-American roots, we want to create the foundation for a holistic development that will help Gratiot/7 Mile find its feet again – both physically, socially, culturally, and economically.”

The work will result in a strategic analysis, an urban and economic development plan, and a conceptual design for the area, including recommendations for the use of nature, culture, safety, activities for children, infrastructure, and other projects. The recommendations will guide the city’s future investments and development of the area. Last May, Fifth Third Bank committed \$5 million toward the neighborhood through the Strategic Neighborhood Fund.

The framework is expected to be completed by next spring.

“We continue to support this evolving vision that will capture the neighborhoods’ energy, provide steps for stability, and encourage growth and prosperity through elements that are qualitative and quantitative,” says Stacey Tobar, project manager and landscape architect at Giffels Webster.

More information about the meetings and project can be found [here](#).

Giffels Webster was founded in 1952.

SLA was founded in 1994 and has since practiced with an offset in the humanistic Scandinavian architectural tradition.

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