
# Infrastructure Barriers to Shared Equity and Community Development in Detroit

## Lessons from Peer Communities and Opportunities for Detroit

**Diamond Bates** · University of Michigan Brademas Fellow · Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD)

TAUBMAN COLLEGE
ARCHITECTURE & URBAN PLANNING

# Why This Matters

1 


## Vacant Land

Underutilized properties across Detroit neighborhoods

2 

## Infrastructure Challenges

Unknown site conditions increase costs and timelines

3 

## Delays & Costs

Predevelopment expenses create financial barriers

4 

## Slower Redevelopment

Better systems improve redevelopment outcomes

# Common Infrastructure Challenges

## Existing Site Conditions

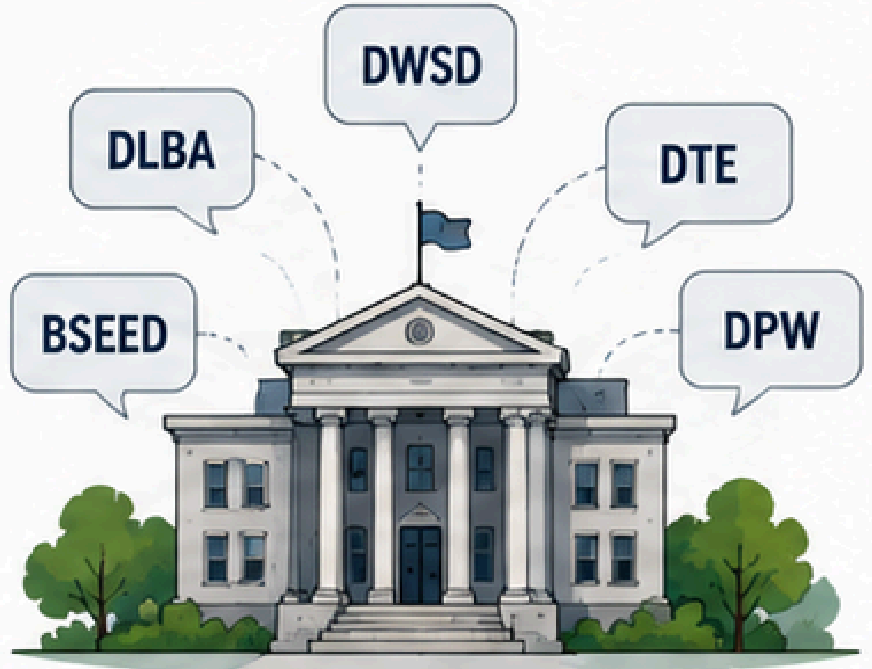
Buried foundations, abandoned utilities, and environmental contamination create unexpected costs


## Limited Property Information

Scattered demolition records, utility data, and environmental records slow decision-making


## Predevelopment Costs

Environmental assessments and engineering studies require upfront investment before financing




## Agency Coordination

Multiple agencies with independent processes extend project timelines

# Research Approach & Key Lessons

Informed by peer city practices, three core lessons emerged to guide Detroit's redevelopment strategy.

**1**

## Detroit

Identify local challenges and data gaps.

**2**

## Peer Communities

Benchmark solutions and shared investments.

**3**

## Key Lessons

Synthesize findings into three core lessons.

**4**

## Opportunities for Detroit

Apply insights to guide redevelopment strategy.

### Better Site Information

Reduces uncertainty and improves planning decisions.

### Shared Infrastructure Investment

Creates neighborhood-wide benefits beyond individual projects.

### Better Agency Coordination

Maximizes return on public investment.

# Three Opportunities for Detroit

A staged framework addressing redevelopment from evaluation through execution.

| STAGE | OPPORTUNITY | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Evaluate  |  Detroit Site Readiness Initiative |  Improve access to site information and reduce uncertainty during predevelopment. |
| 2 Invest  |  Shared Infrastructure Partnership Pilot |  Better align infrastructure investments that benefit multiple projects and neighborhoods. |
| 3 Coordinate  |  Infrastructure Coordination Review Process |  Improve coordination across agencies and maximize the impact of public infrastructure investments. |

# Opportunity 1: Detroit Site Readiness Initiative

## What It Does

- Organizes existing property information into a standardized framework.
- Consolidates utility, demolition, environmental, and zoning data in one accessible resource.
- Pilots with publicly owned properties to refine the approach before scaling.

**1 — Site Readiness Score**
Assess property baseline.

→

**2 — Redevelopment Profile**
Consolidate utilities, demolition, zoning and more.

→

**3 — Readiness Checklist**
Guide next steps for developers.

**Standardized site data reduces predevelopment risk and accelerates developer decision-making.**

# Opportunity 2:
# Shared Infrastructure Partnership Initiative

Pooling resources for infrastructure creates neighborhood-wide value and stretches public dollars further.

1

### Shared Infrastructure Investment

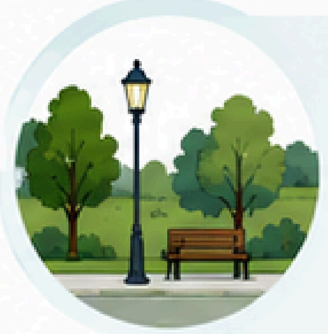
Costs distributed across multiple benefiting projects.

2

### Multiple Redevelopment Projects

Individual projects gain from neighborhood-level improvements.

3



### Neighborhood Revitalization

Cumulative investment transforms community conditions.

**Chicago Example**

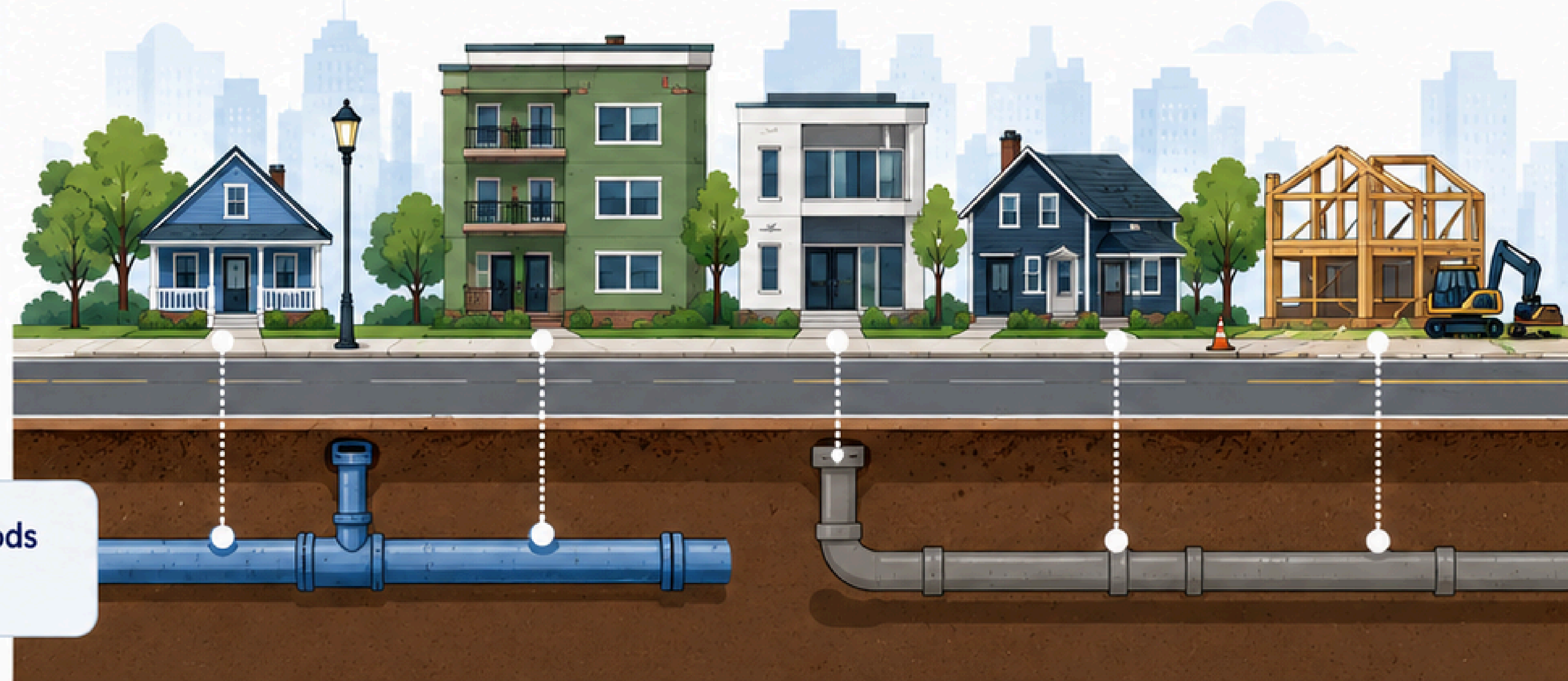
### Shared Cost Sidewalk Program

Splits sidewalk improvement costs across properties that directly benefit.

**Seattle Example**

### Utility Cost Sharing Program

Distributes utility infrastructure costs across multiple parcels.



Shared infrastructure investment builds stronger neighborhoods and delivers greater value for public dollars.

# Opportunity 3: Infrastructure Coordination Review Process

Better alignment across agencies reduces delays, lowers costs, and helps projects move forward.

### 1. Early & Unified Review

Convene agencies early to identify infrastructure needs and clear requirements up front.

### 2. Coordinated Timelines

Align review schedules and approvals to reduce duplication and project delays.

### 3. Clear Standards & Communication

Establish clear guidelines and single points of contact for consistent communication.

### The Impact

Streamlined coordination saves time and money, increases predictability, and accelerates community investment.

**Faster Approvals**
Reduce review times and project delays.

**Lower Costs**
Minimize duplication and change orders.

**Stronger Partnerships**
Build trust and improve collaboration.

**More Impact**
Get more projects built, faster.

**Coordinated infrastructure reviews lead to stronger neighborhoods and a more resilient Detroit.**

# Key Takeaways

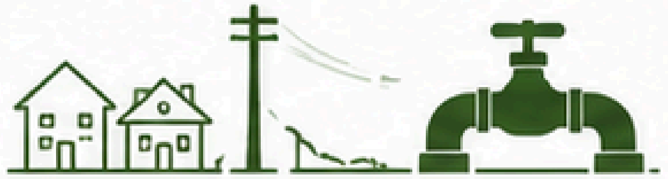
The research identifies practical opportunities to reduce infrastructure barriers and support stronger, more equitable community development in **Detroit**.

### 1. Transparency Builds Confidence

Better access to clear, reliable infrastructure information reduces uncertainty and helps developers plan and invest with confidence.

### 2. Collaboration Multiplies Resources

Shared infrastructure investment and strong utility partnerships stretch public dollars and benefit multiple projects and neighborhoods.



### 3. Coordinated Processes Move Projects Forward

Aligned reviews, clear communication, and early coordination across agencies reduce delays, lower costs, and help good projects get built faster.

### 4. Strategic Investment Creates Lasting Impact

Targeted infrastructure strategies strengthen neighborhoods, attract investment, and support long-term, equitable community development.

**Addressing infrastructure barriers is essential to building a stronger, more equitable Detroit—one neighborhood at a time.**

# *Thank You!*

# THANK YOU
## FOR ATTENDING / LISTENING

Thank you to the **CDAD team** for your guidance, collaboration, and support throughout this fellowship.

### THANK YOU TO THE CDAD TEAM

Grateful for your guidance, collaboration, and support throughout this project.

### THANK YOU COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Appreciate your partnership and commitment to building stronger, more resilient neighborhoods in Detroit.

# ANY QUESTIONS?

I'm happy to answer your questions and hear your thoughts.

*Stronger Neighborhoods.*
*Stronger Detroit.*