

“At the end of the day, the Detroiter may be the most important American there is because no one knows better than he that we’re all standing at the edge of the shaft.” – Charlie LeDuff, Detroit, An American Autopsy

Adam Berry

From the Cracks of a City

The beaver is the reason Detroit exists today. Founded by the French in 1701, the city was mainly used as a fur-trading settlement to keep up with the high demand for beaver pelts needed for European fashion trends. The Detroit River, running parallel to and bisecting Detroit and Canada, was a teeming breeding ground for many beavers, offering the perfect oasis for the furry commodities. Over the next century, beavers were all but wiped out in Detroit and the surrounding areas. The industrial boom, starting in the early 20th century in Detroit, did not help matters—runoff into the river made for a caustic ecosystem, killing off any remaining beavers or wildlife calling Detroit home. The beaver wasn’t the only creature calling Detroit home. At its peak, The Motor City housed over 1.8 million people according to the 1950 census. Today, the city sits at a population just below 700,000 people. Beavers were obviously Beavers were not the only living thing forced from their home.

Detroit, by some accounts, is half empty. Many buildings, lots, and parks have gone into disrepair and are widely ignored by the city and its people. Detroit’s citizens fair no better than the beavers wiped out from its lands many years ago—Detroit is the murder capital of the United states, the unemployed capital, and contains the highest number of citizens living below the poverty line. (1, Census) Necessities such as clean water and readily available food sources are not available to its inhabitants. Detroit has been compared to a third-world country or a third-world ruin. If there is any silver lining to Detroit it is that its people know the meaning of adversity; they know the definition of hard work and survival. Detroit may have hit rock bottom, but if it were to adopt a new motto, it might read, ‘sometimes you have to fall before you fly.’ Detroit can turn around its recent misfortune and bolster a once great society and symbol of American hard work—the modern fall of Rome rising from the ashes. In its current condition, Detroit is underutilized, dangerous, and toxic to its citizens, most of whom endure the hardships of a dysfunctional city. By utilizing Detroit’s greatest resource, vacancy, the establishment of urban farming on a large scale could feed the population while also sustain the city.

Detroit was born on the assembly line. Henry Ford, one of the founders of American ingenuity, could be the Detroit’s father. He opened the doors to Ford Motor Company in hopes of building a business based around hard work and consistent production. When the Model T was first introduced, Ford already had large-scale plans for his budding industry. Ford was famously quoted as saying, “You can’t build a reputation on what you are going to do.” (1, Ford) Abiding by

his principle, he introduced the five-dollar workday, a number unheard of for American wages at the time. Word of high wages spread like wildfire bringing on a renaissance period for Detroit. Between the years of 1910 and 1930, the population of Detroit more than tripled from just over 450,000 to over 1.5 million citizens. (1, Census) At its peak, Detroit was the fourth largest city in the United States.

Detroit's success was short-lived upon reflection. It's fall, however, was and continues to be epic by all records. Racial tensions have been commonplace in Detroit, beginning as early as the 1940's when the Detroit Race Riot lead to 34 deaths, half of which were at the hands of police. From 1946 to 1956, a combined six billion dollars was spent to create new automotive plants in the suburbs of Detroit.



The Packard Plant, Then and Now (1, Kauffman)

This led to many plants closing their doors, including the now infamous Packard Automotive Plant, just on the eastern side of Detroit central. The majority of those citizens moving to the suburbs were the white middle-class. They brought their money with them, which was sustaining many businesses in Detroit as well as services vital to the proper upkeep of an important metropolitan area. The racial tensions continued and in 1967 over 7,000 people were arrested over the course of a five-day period. This was the last straw for many weary Detroiters as over the next few years almost 400,000 white citizens left Detroit for good. The trend continued throughout the rest of the 20th century—to this day, Detroit maintains the highest percentage of Blacks and African-American in any city in the United States.

The Great Fire of Rome fanned flames far across the city in 64 AD. Evasive and petulant, it lasted for six days. What spawned from the ashes was a bigger, more beautiful, and more practical Rome, no longer built from lumber, but from marble and rock. Detroit, possibly a modern-day Rome, has burnt three times. The city's flag spells out its history in Latin, stating, "Speramus Meliora; Resurget Cineribus: We hope for better things; it shall rise from the ashes." While few agree on the cause of The Great Fire of Rome, much is known about the fires that raged through Detroit on multiple occasions; race was always the fuel that fed the flames. While Rome rebuilt and improved on an original idea, the same cannot be said for Detroit; something did rise from the ashes, but it wasn't better. These racial riots, fires, closures to major businesses, and ignorance with regards to human life halted any growth for Detroit. Detroit slowly continued to shrink. Soon, Detroit's population would be less than half what it was at its highest point—it was now on life support. In 2013, at arguably its lowest point, Detroit filed the largest municipal bankruptcy in American history, worth an estimated 20 billion dollars. This massive default on Detroit's debt came only a few years after their famous beavers were found re-populating on the banks of the Detroit River. While many saw the return of the beavers as a comedic example of just how far Detroit was removed from their old industrial ways, a separation from industry towards environmentalism is not a negative, but an optimistic sign.

"If you give a man a vegetable you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to garden you feed him for a lifetime" –Grow Food, Not Lawns

Cultivating a City

Urban farming is not defined in a traditional dictionary. It is both an occupation and a livelihood that is determined by the person or persons partaking in the action. For the sake of this paper, urban farming will be defined as: "The act of growing food or animal husbandry taking place on a plot of land in an urban setting not usually dedicated to producing food. This is usually done in small areas such as abandoned lots, backyards, decks, roofs, or sidewalks. Urban farming can be done on an individual basis or by many people contributing to a municipal farm." Novella Carpenter, the author of *Farm City*, chose to begin her urban farming experiment in Oakland on an abandoned lot adjacent to her newly rented apartment in a slum known as GhostTown.

Novella started small, clearing away old weeds in the lot she chooses to plant in and to erect raised planting beds over the concrete left by a previously demolished building. She mostly taught herself through books found at the public library or through the guidance of her friend Willow, who started a large-scale urban farm called, *City Slicker Farms*. Novella began her experiment purely as self-gratifying, but saw what Willow was doing and the importance she had in the community. While Willow went into her endeavor with this in mind, Novella slowly

learned that her small plot garden was having just as big of an effect on her community: neighbors and the homeless from her area harvested free produce, children played with her rabbits and learned how to raise them, gang members opened up to her and respected her contribution, and the area got a boost of fresh, vibrant color—an oasis buried in a cityscape. Whether on a small-scale or a large one, she saw the significance of what she was doing. If one person started an extensive farm in the city, that was exceptional, but if many people started many small farms, the adding together of those farms serves just as much importance as the prior.

Novella called her style of gardening squat gardening, not dissimilar to the type of squatting that occurred in the novel, *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. She took over an unused lot adjacent to her apartment without the blessing from its owner. Later on, she would meet the owner whose only problem with her garden was the shed her husband raised; perhaps he saw the benefit her work brought to the neighborhood? The importance of her project and what she brought to the table was tangible and something that could be done on a large-scale. Novella mentions in her novel *Farm City* that, “I learned about the history of this practice all over the world. In the developing countries, urban farming is a way of life. Shanghai raises 85 percent of its vegetables within city limits...” (Carpenter, 204) It is common for urban agriculture to sustain individual families, as well as larger groups of people. At some point in time throughout modern history, there has been citywide sanctioned gardening or small animal husbandry used to supplement a balanced diet.

Detroit is no stranger to the concept of urban farming either. During The Panic of 1893, a depression that not only hit Detroit but the entire United States, then mayor Hazen Pingree came to the rescue with a radical idea to solve food shortages of an almost 10% unemployment rate (low compared to the nearly 18% today); the Pingree Potato Patch. His idea was simple: he saw vacant and unused lots around the city and wanted to reclaim them for urban gardens, passing on the produce to hungry citizens around Detroit. This idea was soon adopted by needy and similarly downtrodden cities around the United States. Once the depression gave, the program was halted but was later utilized again during World War I and once more during World War II. An idea like this feeds the hungry, gives jobs to the unemployed, and may even educate the uneducated. Bill Loomis of the *Detroit News* even went as far to say that Hazen Pingree was, “Quite possibly Detroit’s finest mayor.”

“[On his unpaid water bill] I’m on a fixed income like a lot of Detroiters, and by the time I get through buying medicine, gas and a little food, I just don’t have it. – Tyrone Travis

An Unhealthy City

Detroit does not boast many positive statistics. One that needs to be addressed is the level of obesity in students attending schools in the city. Based on a 2013 Centers for Disease Control study, 23% of students were obese. Just as shocking were some of the statistics surrounding their diets—11% had not eaten a serving of fruit in the past seven days while 8% had not eaten a serving of vegetables. Also eye-opening is that 51% of the students polled skipped at least one physical education class in that week. (1, CDC) These numbers are severe as obesity is one of the highest contributors to diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. If children are eating this way, it is safe to assume they are getting it from someone else, most likely their parents or guardians. It is easy to offer a solution to this problem, but when Detroit lacks even a chain supermarket or fresh running water, the answer is not so simple.

Beyond the diseases that can come from poor nutrition and squalid conditions, the city itself is contributing to massive amounts of stress and mental anguish for its citizens. Many of them have a hard time getting by under the poverty line. The combination of debt and unemployment makes it hard for families or individuals to get by. Common crutches for people to utilize as a quick solution to stress are drugs and alcohol, and based on statewide numbers, this seems to be an issue. It was estimated by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health that over 2 million people binge drink during a one-month period in the state of Michigan, whereas 750,000 people are estimated to use illicit drugs including marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and other street drugs. With a population of just over 9 million people, this means over one-fifth of all Michigan residents are misusing substances over the course of any given month.

When these people inevitably need help from services in Detroit such as waste removal, ambulance and hospice workers, police, or firefighters, the response is slow and disinterested. Some estimates have the average time of emergency response of an ambulance anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. A recent Daily News study clocked New York City ambulances at just under 10 minutes average time to respond—this brought a high level of negative press because of new dispatch methods. If 10 minutes is bad for New York City, where does 60 minutes compare?

“Somehow, the city of promise had become a scrap yard of dreams. But fighters do what they do best when they’ve been staggered. They get off their knees and they fight some more.” – Charlie LeDuff, Detroit, An American Autopsy

Eye on Detroit

Charlie LeDuff, a Detroit native, infamously covered Detroit during one of its lowest periods. In his book, *Detroit, An American Autopsy*, he gives firsthand accounts of just what Detroit has become since he left as a young adult. Returning back, he recounts his family’s journey, both past and present, as well as those of the citizens whom which he writes. Charlie began reporting for the

New York Times during the tragedies that unfolded after the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center. He spent many months following and immortalizing the firemen and first responders working at Ground Zero. However, the work that he did in New York City couldn't prepare him for what was waiting for him in Detroit.

Charlie's new-found acquaintance and subject of a few of his news articles, Walt Harris, was one of the many firemen Charlie flocked to upon returning to Detroit. They worked in a firehouse as rundown as the rest of the town, matching the surrounding neighborhood exactly. Their fire alarm didn't work and had to be rigged up to a fax machine connected to a mousetrap in order to ring. The firemen were instructed to bring toilet paper and food from home to support the station. Holes the size of fists littered their boots like gunshots. The day these malfunctions finally took their toll was no surprise to Charlie. "It took a few minutes to find Harris because his homing alarm failed to sound. It failed because it was defective. Because that passes for normal here. Defective equipment for emergency responders. Harris died not because he was burned or because the timber broke his bones. He died of suffocation, unable to breathe from the weight of the roof. If the alarm had only worked." (LeDuff, 109)

This is the norm for emergency responders in Detroit. At one point during Charlie's recounting of his homecoming, he stated a police officer that took him on a ride-along had soaking wet feet from the water leaking into his cab down by the pedals. If the state of the fire and police departments can be used as an example for the rest of Detroit's services, it's no surprise that it may take an ambulance an hour and a half to arrive to an emergency call. There are many poor and out of work people in Detroit who may need this assistance at some point. Charlie spoke to such a man, Harry Bell, who suffered from major health problems that could need this support. "I shook Harry's hand. He looked ill, and he was ill, suffering from obesity and hypertension and high blood pressure. He was my age but looked ten years older. He used to work in a fish house, but was too sick to stand anymore. I worried about him and how his family would get along without him and his steadying influence, if it should come to that." (LeDuff, 72)

Detroit is lacking the major infrastructure to support human life, even though the population has been cut in half over the past fifty years. Things such as safety, health, and clean drinking water should never be compromised in any city, especially a major one. Numerous Detroiters, some sick and barely scraping by, are losing their water completely. Rochelle McCaskill, an ex-hospice worker now on disability with Lupus, was one of these people. A description of the humiliation and distress McCaskill felt was recounted in the August 2014 National Geographic article, *In Detroit, Water Crisis Symbolizes Decline, and Hope:*

'There must be a mistake,' she yelled down. McCaskill explained that she had just paid \$80 on her \$540.41 overdue bill, enough, she thought, to avoid a shutoff. The man wasn't interested in the details. He cranked off her water and marked the sidewalk by her valve with bright blue spray paint, a humiliation inflicted on

delinquent customers that McCaskill likened to 'a scarlet letter.'
Then he drove off in a truck with the red, white, and black logo
dreaded citywide: 'Detroit Water Collections Project.'

Loss of drinking water wasn't the only setback for McCaskill. Suffering from a nagging staph infection, she was told bathe in hot water with bleach as a treatment. Without water, there was no way for her to do this.

Detroit's problem may spur from the sheer number of delinquent accounts, those with over 150 dollar of unpaid debt. Some of those delinquent accounts include Ford Field, where the National Football League team the Detroit Lions, play their home games. Other reports include a department store, J.L. Hudson, which closed its doors and demolished its building in 1998. Since March 2014, the city of Detroit hired an outside company, a cost incurrent of around 5.6 million dollars, to shut off water to offending commercial and residential accounts. In just over two months this company has turned off almost 8000 accounts, a drop in the bucket when the number of delinquent accounts is considered; approximately 150,000. The numbers just don't add up—with so few accounts closed over the course of two months, the outside organization hasn't even paid for themselves yet, leading to the question, why bother?

"Walk a mile along Mack Avenue in each direction from Alter Road to Gratiot Avenue. You will count thirty-four churches, a dozen liquor stores, six beauty salons and barbershops, a funeral parlor, a sprawling Chrysler engine and assembly complex working at less than half capacity, and three-dollar stores—but no grocery stores. In fact, there are no chain grocery stores in all of Detroit."
— Charlie LeDuff, *Detroit, An American Autopsy*

Whole-Hearted Whole Foods

Detroit was without a major supermarket chain until June 2013 when Whole Foods opened its doors. Downtown Detroit was a surprising location to anyone who has shopped at a Whole Foods, but there was more intention to the move than expansion alone. "In Detroit, within the 138 square miles, the life expectancy is 12 years less than outside the city limits," CEO of Whole Foods Robb Walter said. "That just happened to be, the story is too long for today, why we started there. We have a particular set of skills. We're going there to participate in the community." (Woods 1) Robb called Detroit a "food desert," something that anyone with a pulse on Detroit is aware of, but how can the name of luxury and haute food shopping help one of the poorest communities in the United States?

The community felt that Whole Foods was out of place before moving in—"Whole Paycheck" is usually the first retort anyone has when a Whole Foods moves next door, but their business model has them tripling their stores In the United States; this can't be done without expanding to places like Detroit and similarly, Englewood, one of the poorest communities in Chicago. "When something new comes, automatically you're not trusting it. Who does that

benefit?” Said Kristopher Murray executive director of the Washburne Culinary and Hospitality Institute at Chicago’s Kennedy-King College. “Whole Foods, Starbucks, Chipotle — everything would be questioned. But as a resident, you’re at a point where something has to change. This place has to evolve. It needs a catalyst, and a catalyst means somebody with funds which can monetize the development has to be at the table.” (Badger 1) Not only is Whole Foods a beacon for young successful up-and-comers, but a sign that a neighborhood is expanding and becoming more comfortable. Their Detroit store was the first experiment of what looks to be many—a store falling outside of their business model. The Downtown store broke all expectations, shattering their 10-year sales goal in just 14 months. More than just a supermarket, however, Whole Foods started playing an integral part in the community before the store even opened.

Whole Foods has stepped in to help educate locals in both Detroit as well as ahead of their store opening in Englewood. They held classes to teach community members how to cook, proper nutrition, and how to shop on a budget. Ed Peecher, a bishop at a local Englewood church believes the community as a whole needs to rethink what it means to budget their earnings correctly: “Price point was the Number One, the earliest, the strongest and the longest-lasting argument. And when you started contextualizing what price point meant in comparison to a \$450 hair weave, or \$120 sneakers, or \$60 for a fifth of alcohol, then price point is not as strong of an argument as it initially was.” (Bussey 1) So maybe experiment is the wrong word to describe Whole Foods appearing in new markets across the country—they came in and became successes while many other companies have been deterred by Detroit’s demographics. Instead of looking at race or paycheck they started looking at Detroit’s psychographic, a marketing measurement that discovers what people think and feel, not what a statistic makes them out to be. The people in Detroit were searching for a broader source of organic, healthy, and plentiful food; their voices were unfortunately not heard until Whole Foods hired an outside company to find their voice, their psychographic measurements. They saw the over 800 community gardens littering Detroit and a farmer’s market drawing up to 40,000 people; this was another sign that something bigger needed to occur.

And what about those community gardens? Whole Foods saw one in particular in Englewood as a real positive for their business model; Growing Home is a non-profit urban garden growing more than 30,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables a year. They hire locals as well as those who are being rehabilitated after release from prison. They use the farm as job training, a way to get people back into the swing of holding a paying and educational job. The only issue, however, is that most of their produce is shipped off and sold to a wealthier community north of where it is grown. In fact, very little produce is sold at the farm. Unfortunately, very few people in Englewood have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, like Detroit—there is no where Growing Home can offer their supply and people are too content paying for cheap junk food; Whole Foods wants to change this. Ahead of even breaking ground on their Englewood store

they have donated 100,000 dollars to Growing Home. This money bought them a new hoop house; a portable greenhouse made from plastic tarp and PVC pipe that helps extend the growing season to 10 months around Chicago. The money also helped purchase a large walk-in fridge that helps keep recently harvested produce fresher for a longer period. This donation was part of Whole Food's business plan, one they implement in all of their stores including the new one in Detroit—support local farmers to get better produce at better pricing for the local store...who said these couldn't be urban farmers?

Whole Foods may not be the answer to all of Detroit or Englewood's problems, but it offers something more than what was previously there. Citizens need an outlet. Without a place like Whole Foods, there would be nowhere to buy healthy and fresh food. When commenting on pricing, Whole Foods usually falls back on their store brand, 365. "Sometimes, people will come in the store and see that we have a 60-year-old aged vinegar, or olive oil that may be a little more expensive, and people will say, 'You've got a \$30 olive oil!'" Said Larry Austin, Store Manager of the Detroit branch. "But then, we've got 365 olive oil, and it sells for \$7.99 for a liter." (Badget 1) There's an Aldi's down the street that sells eggs for 89 cents and four loaves of bread for five dollars. The thought behind Whole Foods is that even with their store brand, pricing will never fall to that point. Products such as cage-free eggs, hormone-free beef, and non-GMO vegetables come at a price. While the prices are lower across the board to match the community and not the rest of their stores, they can never compete with the prices of a mega-mart, and they don't want to. Offering fresh products that go through a 121-point audit to be sold in a Whole Foods store is offering more to the consumer than a vegetable packed with growth hormones—while there are no approved regulations for the use of GMO in the United State, many advocates believe they are harmful in the long run and that pros of drought and pest resistance are outweighed by cons of antibiotic resistance and nutrient depletion. What was surprising about their offerings, however, was that when Whole Foods opened their doors without carrying more expensive cuts of beef such as porterhouse, the community complained. Whole Foods had to become flexible, learn on the go, and soon realized that food will sell at the right price for the location.

If properly balanced, Whole Foods can serve a community like Detroit and act as a savior to many other impoverished communities around the country. The line they decided to walk was fine, but their flexibility and resolve will indeed help bolster the places they open their doors. It may not be purely business or merely charity, but something in-between. The term in marketing is called Social Responsibility, and when done well, a business can use it to their advantage while helping many in need. It encompasses a model where companies can remain profitable while working purely charitable facets, ethics, and values into their every day. A company such as TOMS has the one-for-one program where every shoe sold another pair donated to a community in need. Whole Foods offers help to the communities where they establish. There are always critics and

cynics who disagree with a socially responsible business model, but the thinking behind it is that, 'If I don't do it, who will?' That's finally what someone needed to say about Detroit. Whole Foods is here to stay in places like Detroit, and they have a long-term lease already signed in Englewood.

"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another." – Charles Dickens

Giving Thanks

On a cold November afternoon, cots are wheeled into a Detroit Rescue Mission Ministry, packing the already over-capacity facility to make room for more homeless men, women, and children. Ice and wind drove many to stay indoors this past week, but those with nowhere to go had to turn to shelters. Paschal Eve, a spokesman for Mission Ministries said, "We always try to stretch our resources to attend to as many people as possible. We don't turn anybody back, and they're free to stay as long as we can accommodate them." (Allen, 1) Detroit is attempting to overcome its hardships. Luckily, there has been a steady influx of charity from both in and out-of-state. When the water issues surrounding the city were brought to the attention of its non-citizens, people gladly offered a helping hand. Enter people such as Justin Wedes and DeMeeko Williams, two volunteers who started the Detroit Water Brigade. They deliver fresh bottled water to homes that need it across Detroit. On top of that, they form peaceful protests to spread awareness of this growing problem. The group has raised over 30,000 dollars so far and is enlisting the help from Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets. Outlets such as this led to a Canadian group driving 750 gallons of water to Detroit for help. There are countless other stories of help surfacing, from people sending money and fresh water to organizations, to a directory for people to get water relief. Ross Howard, a single father of seven learned that his overdue bill had been paid in full by the Detroit Water Project. He said, "I cried like a baby." (1, Mitchell)

While help may be coming in the form of charity, one of the downfalls of charity is it cannot be sustained. As events arise, donators will often aim their attention elsewhere. Furthermore, without proper charitable organizations, it is hard for people to donate money to a city in need. Jala Jackson, the 16-year-old daughter of Marcel, explains the need that is not currently being addressed in Detroit, safe land. "We have this neighborhood park and sometimes I go there with my friends. We usually play around, but there's a lot of bad people on the block. You just never know if something bad happens there." (1, Bouffard) If charity isn't a reasonable sustained solution to Detroit's woes, maybe one can be found in the empty lots and abandoned parcels littering to landscape.

It is estimated that on any given night up to 5,000 children are wandering the streets of Detroit without a place to lay their heads. (Hicks, 1) Steven Brown, a 21-year-old living in Detroit, was one of them. In a recent interview, he brought

up his biggest fear, "I might not wake up. ... I could freeze to death." (Hicks, 1) He did, however, make it to the Michigan Covenant House in time to save his life and get warm. In order to bring attention to this issue, many executives across Detroit staged what they are calling a sleep out to raise money for inner-city homelessness. "The Sleep Out provides me and other business people a chance to come together and do more than write a check." Said Sam Slaughter, owner of Sellers Auto Group based in Detroit. Some 200 people along with Sam slept outside in the frigid November weather to bring awareness. They raised over \$197,000, most of which goes to the Empowerment Plan, a nonprofit organization based in Detroit looking to support their community of homeless.

Thanksgiving in the United States gives citizens a chance to reflect on what they are thankful for. It's an opportunity to take time out of a busy year and spend a few days surrounded by family and loved ones. Still, there are many that don't get the opportunity to do this. Ford Motors, still working to revitalize Detroit, has put over a million dollars into a hunger relief program this Thanksgiving. They plan to deliver meals to over 6,000 senior citizens who might not have the family support that others are so thankful for. Jim Vella, President of Ford, sums up their campaign by saying, "We're proud to help the Salvation Army's Bed and Bread Club travel to those in need, because hunger never takes a holiday. By addressing the issue of hunger through other programs such as Ford Mobile Food Pantries, Ford Focus on Child Hunger and Meet Up and Eat Up, we are going further to create stronger communities." (Ford, 1)

Sustained charity is something every nonprofit organization founded in hopes of reforming for what Detroit is looking. While the holiday season gives a well-needed boost to all charities, Valerie West, spokeswoman for the United Way of Southeast Michigan says, "The community needs year-round." (Walker, 1) That's one of the biggest issues plaguing nonprofit organizations—sustained funding. Many organizations love one-time donations, but would rather have a monthly donation or a subscription that gives for a longer period. When a cold November hits, for example, resources are spread thin. This has a ripple effect on the rest of the year if more money, time, and equipment are spent on a disaster. While many people do give to charities spread across Detroit, the one common theme expressed by all of them is that it just isn't enough. A larger company, such as Whole Foods, expanding their presence into Detroit is a move that offers constant help over a longer period of time—this is the sort of move charities in Detroit are looking for. Recently, many such foundations received a real boost in publicity when Magic Johnson, former National Basketball Association star and community advocate, stepped in to help tip off the charity season. In a tweet Johnson sent about his time spent in Detroit, he said, "My purpose on this Earth is to give back! Seeing all the smiles and receiving so many hugs was amazing!" (Montemurri,1) Johnson spent time feeding nearly 2,000 low-income families with his wife Cookie. They felt good giving back to the community where Johnson when to college, winning the NCAA national championship back in 1979. Having a superstar like Johnson present in

the community spreads wakefulness so much more than an anonymous donation. Similarly to the sleep-out, doing something and being seen is more powerful than a gift.

This power is already being felt by Detroit Charities: Bill Birndorf, an executive of Apple Marketing Co. that operates North of Detroit had recently started a nonprofit organization called Higher Hopes, looking to distribute food packages to underprivileged families. He received a lot of donations through his GoFundMe.com campaign and was able to hit his goal of giving out 1,000 care packages before Thanksgiving to such families in Detroit. "I'm just really happy to contribute to the revival of Detroit and help people and families stay together for Thanksgiving. This is what it's all about, the families," said Birndorf. "It just makes me feel good to be able to do this and be part of this. It's gone from nothing to feeding 1,000 families in a very short period of time." (Montemurri,1) Beyond what Magic Johnson did to help families across Detroit, his presence was continued in the form of a charity such as Higher Hopes. One person seeing what Johnson did in the news or on television might be lead to Birndorf's charity page of a similar notion—awareness is spread and continues to spread. While this type of charity, too, isn't infinite, it is vaster than a single donation.

"Many of us who aren't farmers or gardeners still have some element of farm nostalgia in our family past, real or imagined: a secret longing for some connection to a life where a rooster crows in the yard." – Barbara Kingsolver, Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

Garden of Eden

One of the major questions Detroit is facing is what to do with the abandoned buildings and lots across the city; this is no easy task when almost half of it is vacant. One solution that Detroit has adopted is to spend 850 million dollars to tear down all of the buildings—this is not a proper solution. Karen Chava-Knox, President of Eden Gardens Block Club, is one of the few people taking initiative to restore a once great luster her city had. Her mission in her words is to, "...provide healthy food for the community and to teach our children entrepreneurship." (1, O'Hara) To begin her project she converted a lot near Wayne Country Airport into a working farm. She mentioned in a Vice News interview that she lives in a "Forgotten area" that doesn't get the support that downtown Detroit seems to get—this was her best option. With her help, coupled with other similar organizations such as D-Town Farms and the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, people in need of nourishment and enrichment now have an outlet.

Novella Carpenter found herself in a similar situation after living in Oakland for a few years. She decided she wanted to give back more to her community and began helping a popular and infamous community outreach program from another time—the Black Panthers. Melvin Dickson, an original

Black Panther from the Bay Area in 1972 called her the salad lady, as she offered them lettuce to assist their literacy program. Dickson sees kids in his community eating poorly and believes this is detrimental to their education—this was written into the original 10-point plan preached by the Black Panthers. He told Novella, “Kids are hyper on that junk food. They can’t learn in that state of mind. One thing we imparted was a nutritious diet. That’s why we fed them three meals.” Novella returned by telling him, “That’s why I’m bringing this salad.” (Carpenter, 150) Proper diet is essential and not something easy to come by in large impoverished cities. Anyone who is in need of a healthy meal can get one with the aid of urban farming—Novella tried this for herself.

One important question that Novella debunked through her experiment was if an independent urban farmer could be completely self-sustainable. Taking a page out of her parent’s book, Novella created what she deemed the 100-yard diet. The goal was simple: eat only things that were grown in her garden or the animals she raised herself. Food could be traded for, but only food grown by another gardener. Last but not least important, no dumpster diving, something Novella, and her husband were completely used to in order to feed their animals at low cost. Novella went through a few hardships in her diet: No grains, no coffee, and no meat until her animals were ready, but she succeeded. At the end of her one-month trial she lost weight, saved money, felt great and proved how tangible urban farming could be on a personal level.

From an individual point of view, urban gardening shows real promise in reducing money spent on food, increasing health and well-being, and possibly providing a job if the work is incentivized. Farms on large scales could be even more beneficial to the city in need. Landscape architect Michael Hough writes in *City Form and Natural Process* that, “The observer of city gardens cannot fail to notice that not one of the plants that are growing in the most urban residential areas, or that appear on planting plans, have the slightest nutritional value. However, opportunities for using edible plants are just as great as using those that are purely ornamental. Tree planting along city streets could include fruit-bearing species.” (Carpenter, 152) One scene in *Farm City* shows Novella sitting on an abandoned roof eating unripe plums from a forty-year-old tree hanging over a private fence—any tree growing on private property that overhangs onto public is legal to pick, even if it is abandoned. After some quick stewing and canning, Novella enjoyed her bounty for months afterward. The possibilities are endless if a city gets behind sustainable gardening, even on sidewalks and public parks. If Michael Hough has his way, there may be apple orchards running through Detroit in the near future.



Detroit, 2025 (1, Morris)

"I thought I wouldn't live through it. But you do. You learn to love the place somebody leaves behind for you." – Barbara Kingsolver, Prodigal Summer

Get the Lead Out

Since moving to Brooklyn, I've always wanted to have a green space to call my own. Just over a year ago I found the apartment that made that dream come true. Seeing apartments with outdoor space larger than the living space is not uncommon in my neighborhood, but an area with five mature fig trees in it, is. After more than 60 years of growing time, it was no surprise to me to find that my soil was lead-free, but this isn't the case for many other urban gardeners and farmers in Brooklyn. Some soil tests around my neighborhood have shown a staggering 90 times more lead in the ground than deemed healthy by the EPA. Even in small amounts, lead contamination can be a real issue, leading to many health problems. If lead contamination is such a nightmare for urban gardeners, why did the population of urban gardeners increased more than 19% from 2004 to 2009? This is because lead contamination may not be as big of a setback to urban gardening as once thought.

The EPA distinguishes lead contamination in soil in three separate categories: Low risk, potential risk, and high risk. Small amounts, or anything less than 100 parts per million (ppm), is safe for a growing all fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants. Potential contamination requires that the gardener takes some precautions before eating their edible plants, but requires little to no special treatment. With a little bit of knowledge and hard work, highly contaminated lead soil can be made safe to plant edibles. As most lead contamination in soil comes from the air and omissions, the easiest way to reduce the levels of lead in

homegrown produce is to wash it thoroughly with either a 0.5% solution of soap water or a 1% solution of vinegar water. Regardless of lead contamination, this is a good practice for any home gardener or farmer. Other precautions include wearing gloves while gardening, removing shoes before entering the home, or treating the soil.

Higher levels of lead or a high lead soil test, may be frightening to a home gardener, but treating this soil may be the only requirement before planting and enjoying edible plants. The easiest way to lower lead levels and soil is to raise the pH of that soil to above 7.0. This can be achieved by adding amounts of lime to the earth and using a pH test strips to check the pH of the soil. The higher pH will bind the lead together, making it harder to get absorbed by plants. This is a common practice, one that even the White House edible garden had to use when Michelle Obama began her urban gardening project. By using lime to raise the pH of her soil, she was able to lower the lead content of her garden to below 100 ppm.

Another soil purifying technique involves the introduction of organic matter into contaminated soil. Many urban gardeners already compost their scraps, but for beginners, this may not be readily available. Many gardening supply stores and major hardware stores should offer a variety of organic soils with no lead content. Replacing half of the contaminated soil with this natural mixture will help reduce lead levels significantly, although this process may be costly depending on what soil is used and how large the garden space is.

An EPA study done in Maine has shown that planting leafy green vegetables such as spinach or mustard greens can significantly reduce lead levels in the soil. Leaves from plants, as well as plants with short root systems, will absorb lead at higher rates than other plants. These two designs make these plants perfect for absorbing lead in contaminated soil. The only downside to a technique such as this is that the plants should not be eaten, and should be left to clean the soil for one whole season. Anyone who wants to utilize a garden during their current growing season may wish to consider a different option.



Brooklyn Garden, May 1st, 2014

My five fig tree is in Brooklyn shade nearly 100% of my yarded area. Luckily, I have a concrete porch that gets the most sunlight throughout the day. This is why a raised planting bed was the best option for my urban garden. This option may be the best for urban gardeners with high levels of lead content in their soil. Raised planting beds are perfect for urban gardeners because of their flexibility. They can be made to fit the space, can be made as big or small as the owner wants, and can even be made portable. With proper drainage, I successfully made my urban garden on a full concrete surface. Using a non-treated wood such as Cedar, a few nails, and a little bit of hard work, I was able to create a 12' x 4' raised planting bed in early spring. The biggest cost of this project was the soil itself, but I'm sure that it could have been done less expensively. Many gardening websites and books will recommend at least 12 inches of soil in a raised garden bed; I made mine with 18 inches of soil for larger plants, which also added to my cost of soil. While I did not calculate the net gain or loss of my garden in its first season, it was heavily utilized, and the pure joy and excitement I gained from using hand grow and herbs, fruits, and vegetables overshadows any slight loss of money put into the project. With that being said, not everyone has a few hundred dollars left in their budget to purchase a raised planting bed for gardening. Luckily, small and cost-effective kits are sold for those who still want the thrill and joy of gardening without all of the costs.



Brooklyn Garden, July 1st, 2014

Not all plants are created equal. As mentioned earlier, plants with leafy greens and low-lying root systems are more likely to pull the lead out of the soil than other plants. If a garden is known to have higher levels of lead, it will be prudent to refrain from planting such vegetables for food purposes. Plants such as beans, peas, eggplants, and tomatoes have been shown to pull very minute levels of lead out of the soil and may be considered safe to plant in higher lead soil. In fact, it is rare for fruits or vegetables to show any lead toxicity, as the leaves of their plants will pull lead from the soil before the fruit does. With this being known, the only possibility of lead contamination in an urban garden would come from surface lead that can be removed by thorough washing. If there is any doubt that there may be lead in soil, it can always be tested with an in-home kit and a small price. Many urban gardeners stress that this should be done before planting in an urban garden, no matter how confident the gardener is that there will be low levels of lead in the soil.

Would this be considered a setback for a Detroit urban gardening project? Many vacant lots in Detroit that can be used for urban farms or gardens are in proximity to high amounts of motor vehicle traffic. Detroit is also home to a large number of abandoned or decaying buildings. Both of these are risk factors in lead contamination of soil, but using one or a few of the techniques previously described can significantly reduce the likelihood of lead poisoning through urban farming. At the very least, large raised garden beds can be erected on the surface so that contaminated soil is not used to grow life. As long as these raised

beds are made out of a material that hasn't been treated with a poisonous agent, there is no risk for contaminating soil. While it may be an inefficient technique, urban gardens can also be grown in large terra-cotta planters. If there is a will, there is a way, and if an urban gardener wants to grow edible plants in their backyard, it can be done regardless of soil contamination or growing situation.

“His first shift since returning to town was nearly over, and he was pouring vinegar onto the hot grill, where it sputtered and foamed and hissed. The air was full of it for a few seconds, enough to get everyone at the counter teared up, but just as quickly it was gone, with an implicit promise that anything so intensely horrible would by design pass swiftly.” - Richard Russo, Empire Falls

Empire Falls

Detroit could easily take the place of the setting in many modern dystopian novels. If *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* by Haruki Murakami stands as a literary example of a desolate town driven by corruption and its own perils, then *Empire Falls* by Richard Russo serves as a journal of the inner-most thoughts and workings of the people residing in that town. When focusing research on a possible solution to the greater problem in Detroit, people's essence is often left out of the numbers or worse, condensed into one-liners, quotes attempting to sum up the whole of the suffering and mindset of hundreds of thousands of people. Moreover, to try to find this information or get it straight from the source may prove difficult; many people only know the lives they live and don't see any inherent issue with them, soldiering on through life, steadfast and never faltering. How else could the very minute details and deepest reflections of those living in a city such as Detroit or *Empire Falls* be summed up any more eloquently than in a fictional book, perhaps borrowing heavily from real or near-real events?

Miles Roby, the main protagonist and town-wide figure from *Empire Falls*, could easily be a citizen of Detroit. Born right in *Empire Falls*, he only left town for three-and-a-half years to attend college before being drawn back against his mother's wishes while she was on her deathbed. Once his mother passed away, he was faced with a choice and decided to stay for the remainder of his adult life. He now works for his mother's old boss, a woman who seems to own most of the town, including the *Empire Falls Grill*, which Miles hopes to own one day. Miles has seen the town change for the worse his whole life as it slowly began to lose its citizens as well as the only source of jobs and income in the town, the large textile mill, again owned by Mrs. Whiting. Miles's father, a decrepit old drunk without two cents to his name, Max, seems to be conning Miles every step of his way through life. David, his younger brother, is a recovering alcoholic who permanently maimed his arm in a drunk driving accident—they work in the restaurant together, although their relationship is fleeting. Miles is getting a divorce with his wife, Janine, and hopes beyond hope that he gives his daughter,

Tick, more of a change to get through life than he had. Recounting his mother's last few moments, he sums up the exodus of Empire Falls, a hyperbole, if not one that hits close to home. "Looking down the deserted street, Miles couldn't help feeling that everyone in the town must have heard the terrible screams. His brother, a mere boy, had fled into the bottle, his father to the Florida Keys. It was almost possible to believe her screams were responsible for the mass exodus that by now had lasted more than two decades, a panicky flight from her pain that emptied out the town." (Russo, 100)

For better or worse, the town is always there to serve as a constant reminder of Mile's mediocre life. His old and estranged friend, Jimmy Minty, still lives in Empire Falls as he always did, now working as a high-ranking police officer. While Miles left Empire Falls only to be drawn back, Jimmy never left. It becomes a point of contention; he believes Miles thinks he is better than the town because he spent time away from it, although Miles never outwardly says this. Even Mile's annual trip to his childhood oasis of Martha's Vineyard is enough time away from home to make Jimmy take offense. He tells Miles of a trip he took to visit a friend that went to college a few towns over from Empire Falls; this was the first time he had ever left his hometown. He accounts returning to Empire Falls that evening by saying, "'See, this town doesn't seem strange to me. It never did, not for one second. After that night in Orono? When I crossed that bridge into Empire Falls, right then was about the happiest minute in my whole damn life. You can laugh all you want, but it's true.'" (Russo, 294) Miles wasn't laughing, but the stark contrast between the two men shows how different they are, even if they have both spent the majority of their lives there. To Jimmy, a lifer has spent every waking minute in Empire Falls. Even though Miles has spent his whole life there minus three years, he is almost tainted by having this outside view on the world. This, Jimmy thinks, is why they are no longer friends.

While Jimmy Minty might not have the right thought on outsiders, even insiders, one person from the novel that has it all figured out is Bea, Mile's ex-wife's mother. Bea owns one of the few businesses in Empire Falls that isn't related to Mrs. Whiting in any way, a bar down the street from Miles. Bea's stance on Empire Falls is that it is full of diehards. "The good news was that diehards were Empire Falls's strong suit, and Bea counted herself among them." (Russo, 334) However, this group isn't accepting of change but is quick to tell you they want it. When commenting on a Sunday afternoon in her bar full of patrons watching football she recounted the many fans complaining about the television being too small, the bar stools too shoddy; the place too crowded. She thinks none of it is a problem, and that imbalance is a natural thing in life. "But there wasn't a damn thing wrong with imbalance. What was life but good barstools and bad ones, good fortune and bad, shifting from Sunday to Sunday, year to year, like the fortunes of the New England Patriots. There was no such thing as continual good fortune—or misfortune, except for the Red Sox, whose curse seemed eternal." (Russo, 333) Another strong female character, Charlene, who was Mile's life-long love interest, acted as a messenger for David's thoughts

regarding Miles and the rest of his family. “David has this theory that between your man and dad and him and your there’s, like, one complete person. Your father never thinks about anybody but himself, and your mom was always thinking about other people and never herself. David thinks only about the present and you think only about the past and future.” (Russo, 226) This could be true of the whole town—many people acting of their own accord, unorganized enough join together and do what is necessary to save Empire Falls and the people in it. This was one of Grace Roby’s biggest fears.

Thinking of anyone but herself, Grace Roby told Miles her views on life and Empire Falls before she passed. “The majority, she would remind him, never do their share. Grace believed that those who could see their duty clearly were required by God to do the heavy lifting for the morally blind. Where Cindy Whiting was concerned, when his mother said ‘we,’ she really meant ‘he.’” (Russo, 240) This was as much for Miles as it was for the entire town—no one seemed to take control of the things they needed to do in order to get the job done. Miles, later in the journey, comes to much of the same conclusion as his mother did once seeing the poor workmanship done when fixing Bea’s restroom. “When they were finished, they’d patched the Sheetrock in some places, left gaping holes in others. This crapper, it occurred to Miles, was his hometown in a nutshell. People who lived in Empire Falls were so used to misfortune that they’d become resigned to more of the same. Why repair and repaint a wall you’d only have to deface again the next time the pipes froze?” (Russo, 339) Is this the pessimistic conclusion everyone will come to about Detroit? If Empire Falls and its citizens are used as an example, the answer is no.

“You can’t possibly judge your ability to control something until you’ve experienced the extremes of its capabilities.” (Russo, 248-249) These are the words of the ever intelligent matriarch of Empire Falls, Mrs. Whiting, given to Miles as a teenager learning to drive for the first time. These poignant words ended up being what Miles needed to fix his life and eventually find his place in Empire Falls for the first time. With Mrs. Whiting out of the picture, the city finally started to thrive, but it didn’t come without a heart-wrenching disaster and a lot of hard work to get it there. Miles realized both extremes that afternoon in Mrs. Whiting’s Lexus, but also seeing just how high or low Empire Falls could go. In its low point, Empire Falls had to recover from a school shooting, but in its peak its houses were selling, textile mill was bought and revitalized, restaurants booming, and Miles was in the middle of it all. The corrupt police were taken away; the trouble youths dealt with humanely. The restoration of Empire Falls could best be summed up by Miles, who in his angriest moment found more joy in taking something away than he did making it beautiful again. “It felt far more satisfying to be peeling something away, creating ugliness before restoring beauty.” (Russo, 336)

“Is Detroit going to turn things around? I could lie and tell you, yes. But you know what? This city is screwed. Only place I’ve ever been that looks anything like

Detroit does now, Chernobyl. I'm not being funny. That's the truth. – Anthony Bourdain, *Parts Unknown*

On the Menu: Local Summer Melons with Coriander Blossoms

Chef Craig Lieckfelt grew up in Detroit. He left to follow a storied career as a chef working for such giants as Gotham Grill and Jean-Gorges in New York City. He could have stayed in New York with a guaranteed spot on any restaurant chain. He could have moved to Chicago, Miami, Las Vegas, or any other major Mecha or up-and-coming foodie hotspot to open up his venture—a restaurant by his name. He could have earned one, even two Michelin stars if he wanted to. Instead, he moved back to Detroit. Underneath an overpass in the back space of an art gallery, Craig runs a pop-up restaurant called Guns and Butter. There will be no Michelin star for him here in the seedy underbelly of Detroit, but he feeling he gets from the work he does is arguably unmatched. “People say—they often say, thank you.” Craig told Anthony Bourdain on the season two finale of his newest show, *Parts Unknown*. “Like—we just moved back from Chicago. We lived in Chicago the last six years. We lived in L.A. the last six years. Thank you; this is exactly what we wanted.”

The place was packed and not because Anthony Bourdain was sitting in filming for his show, Charlie LeDuff to his right, pouring gin into his chilled soup. The place is full of the young, the talented, the creative and artistic youth that has flocked to Detroit, enticed by the urban decay, the cheap living, and the unbounded opportunity that can be obtained.

Bourdain: What you've done is counterintuitive. I mean, there is sort of conventional career path for chefs.

Lieckfelt: Right.

Bourdain: Instead, you decide to go to Detroit.

Lieckfelt: Hell yes. Come back home. People think I'm crazy for going back to Detroit.

Anthony asked Craig the obvious question; “In what way does opening a fine dining restaurant in Detroit benefit the majority of Detroiters?”

Lieckfelt: How is it not making it better? How is sitting back not doing anything making it better? How is only buying my products from Detroit or farmers in Detroit not helping Detroit? I'm supplying from Detroit. I'm hiring people from Detroit. Everybody here lives in Detroit.

Bourdain: If I were asked the same question, I would say I don't fucking know... I'm doing what I do well.

Lieckfelt: Right. Exactly. I mean—

Bourdain: I'm doing it in a place I love and I am demonstrating that yet another person gives a fuck about Detroit and believes in it enough to be here.

Lieckfelt: You're 100 percent right. I never really thought about it until you asked that question. It's like—to me, it's just obvious.

How does one person with an outside-the-box, truly inspired design supply his venture? They do it with the help of an equally creative and innovative individual, in this case, Malik Yakini. Malik saw how he could help Detroit by converting nearly 40 square miles of unused green space into something benefiting not only people like Craig Lieckfelt, but the community as a whole. His urban farm, D-Town, is located on the western side of Detroit. He got a chance to meet and speak with Anthony:

Bourdain: Where are we?

Yakani: We're in the largest park in the city which is called Rouge Park.

Bourdain: Did you just come in and start digging or did you have permission to come in?

Yakani: We had permission to come in.

Bourdain: Was that difficult?

Yakani: It was very difficult. We negotiated with the city for two years. Part of the difficulty was they really didn't know what hook to hang our request on. They're used to developers come and say I want to build a strip mall or I want to build a parking structure, but they're not used to people saying, 'we want land to build a model organic farm.'

If there were critics and cynics surrounding Craig, there certainly were for Malik. Anthony Bourdain even said himself that urban farming is looked upon by many as "an affectation." He goes on to elaborate by saying that, "Here in Detroit, it's not. With nature taking back the landscape block by block, the urban farm is the last line of defense." This hasn't stopped Malik from doing what he thinks is right. Staring right in the face of poverty, racism, obesity, poor nutrition, and a plethora of other problems. In a January 2013 article featured by Takepart, Malik

told Clare Leschin-Hoar that, “I try not to get used to the blight. I still try to see it with fresh eyes. It’s not something I ever want to get used to.”

Malik had his calling, one that chefs and locals throughout Detroit saw as purely positive, in fact, he won a James Beard Award for his efforts in leadership—one of the top awards in the culinary realm. Unfortunately for Malik, it wasn’t just the city of Detroit that was against him; the elements themselves played a major role in his success or failure. Each section of the United States is split into zones by the USDA and agreed upon by many gardening organizations. Detroit falls between zones four and five—the lower the zone, the colder the weather generally. This means that their first freeze-free date falls between the end of May and middle of June whereas their last freeze-free date can fall as early as middle September; this is a very short growing window. Oakland, for example, where Novella Carpenter started her urban farm, is a zone nine climate, meaning she could produce nearly year round. Malik does not have that perk. There isn’t much that can survive the hard ground, and common snow found in the middle of February, but hunger does not discriminate against any season. Using miniature and cost-effective greenhouses during the colder months, Malik can still produce hearty vegetables such as collards and other leafy greens. That’s why even during the coldest months, locals can still see and eat baby kale or bok choy straight from the near-frozen ground.

In a 2011 interview by Hannah Wallace of Civil Eats, D-Town farms was still in its younger years. Malik the educational aspect of his farm and part of what won him a James Beard Award. “People are accustomed to going to grocery stores to buy food and they’re used to these large, pretty pieces of produce. Often, organic food is not as large and sometimes it has flaws. So we have to re-educate people about the esthetics of food and the nutritional value of food, at the same time as we educate people about the value of eating whole foods.” How can one man re-educate an entire community set in its ways, doggedly eating unhealthy and unfulfilling foods? The answer is simple—if there are no grocery stores, no corner markets, then there is no food to be had. D-town farms supply’s a demand. Anthony Bourdain even brought this topic up with Malik during their interview:

Bourdain: Other than Whole Foods that just came in.

Yakani: Yes.

Bourdain: Not a single national food chain?

Yakani: No. No. In 2007 Farmer Jack closed his last stores in Detroit. And that was kind of the end of the big chains in Detroit.

Ever the cynic, Anthony followed up his question by asking Malik if there would ever be anything more to his farm than sustainable farming for the betterment of Detroit:

Bourdain: You're not anticipating selling outside of Detroit?

Yakani: There's greater demand in Detroit than all of the farmers locally can supply. So first we want to supply that local demand in the city of Detroit.

Bourdain: To what degree do you think that this model can be replicated in and around the city?

Yakani: Well, clearly, we think urban agriculture has great potential. And one of the things that we have in Detroit is access to huge amounts of land. If we're able to produce even a small percentage of the food that is consumed in Detroit and circulate the revenues from that food within our community, then we're able to create a more vibrant, healthy, economically strong community. So we think it has tremendous potential.

In a way, Craig and Yakani are urban pioneers, a term that has been thrown around very liberally referring to Detroit, but rarely holds any salt. These two individuals went against what was considered the 'normal' thing to do and have thrived in a community where the word isn't often used. Strive? Maybe—but thriving is an unobtainable mystery. Survive? Absolutely—but how long can the downtrodden survive without the proper supporting cast at their sides picking them up? In a way, the future of Detroit is already here; growing from the soil in the form of a kale sprout or nestled in the backroom of an art gallery on a bleach-white plate. Craig served a dish at Guns and Butter consisting of chilled melon gazpacho with coriander leaves, lemon verbena broth, and baby tomatoes—all locally sourced. Anthony Bourdain summed up his experience in Detroit in a perfect mouthful, "What will the Detroit of the future look like? Whatever you may think it should look like, it will probably taste like this."

Who will live in the Detroit of the future? There's no question, is there, that Detroit will come back. In one form or another, a city this magnificent, this storied, this American cannot, will not ever disappear into the weeds. There are too few places this beautiful for it to be allowed to crumble like Ankor or Rome.

Someone will live in a smaller, tighter, no doubt hipper, much contracted new Detroit. But who will that be? Will it be the people who stuck it out here, who fought block-by-block to keep their city from burning, who struggled to defend their homes, keep up appearances as all around them their neighborhoods emptied.

What will Detroit look like in 20 years? Or 50? That's not just a Detroit question. That's an America question. – Anthony Bourdain, Parts Unknown

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