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– DETROIT'S FIGHTS FOR COMMUNITY BENEFITS: Exploring the Challenges and Strategies of Securing Community Benefits Agreements in a Legacy City

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Abstract

Community benefits agreements (CBAs) have emerged from the accountable development movement as a widespread, most often community-initiated practice for extracting benefits from development projects at the cost of developers. Scholarship chronicling the strategies for negotiating benefits has largely concluded that a strong real estate market is needed for local communities to secure the necessary leverage to win benefits. However, there are cases when legacy cities with weak real estate markets have been successful in negotiating for community benefits. We examine 14 CBAs negotiated in Detroit to uncover lessons about the ways that cities with weaker economies and lower-profile reputations as investment-ready places may experience brokering agreements. In light of its status as a legacy city, this article uses Detroit's CBAs to explore the unique challenges in that city and the specialized strategies that emerged from organizing CBAs there. We find that Detroit faces specific challenges to realizing benefits like jobs and affordable housing due to structural issues brought on by decades of decline. We also find that Detroiters have innovated ways to extract benefits to mitigate some of the historic neglect and disinvestment in their neighborhoods through CBAs.

Introduction

An accountable development movement has aimed to place more power in the hands of communities historically marginalized from the benefits of development, and who have disproportionately shouldered its costs (Gross *et al*., 2002; Parks and Warren, 2009). This movement has popularized organizing for items like policies that support affordable housing and job creation, and other ways of extracting community benefits from development processes. One of its most popular strategies is the community benefits agreement (CBA). CBAs are 'legally enforceable contracts that result from a negotiation process whereby a developer will provide certain benefits in return for a community group's promise to support the project' (Leavitt, 2006: 365). They have in recent years also included policies that aim to mandate the contribution of community benefits from development (Gross *et al*., 2002; Belongie and Silverman, 2018). A growing body of literature has explored the efficacy of different ways of organizing for community benefits and has troubleshooted the complex task of negotiating for benefits (Gross *et al*., 2002; Leavitt, 2006; De Barbieri, 2016).

Scholarship on CBAs has made the observation that such agreements are more likely to occur in cities with strong real estate markets (Wolf-Powers, 2010; Saito and Truong, 2015). Despite conditions that one might predict would limit the capacity of CBAs, legacy cities with a reputation for population loss, that are not often in direct

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competition for investment dollars with places like New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, have found themselves at the negotiating table. Though not many in number, legacy cities like Detroit, Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Milwaukee have all secured benefits through CBAs. Building on the extant literature that has used case study analysis to develop strategies for securing benefits—often in some of the strongest markets and most competitive cities for investment—this article asks how these agreements are managed in weak market cities.

The article explores the case studies of 14 Detroit agreements to better understand how communities in legacy cities have overcome obstacles in negotiations: the CBAs for the Gordie Howe International Bridge, the District Detroit CBA and the 12 projects negotiated (at the time of data collection) under the city-wide Community Benefits Ordinance. These agreements have been brokered in a city that has lost about half of its population since its peak in the 1950s, and has faced the uphill urban social and development challenges of federal and state policies that have supported racial segregation and organized deprivation (Sugrue, 2005; Hackworth, 2019). These conditions continue as the maligned city is frequently subject to media tropes around violence and economic destitution, a public image that has also supported a development climate of desperation, which will be unpacked further in this article. Detroit is also a city that has come out of a bankruptcy in the last decade. Its development reality grapples, like those of other rust belt cities, with the logic that strong real estate markets are typically where such agreements thrive. While these agreements are not without shortcomings, their idiosyncrasies provide insights into how conditions of decline uniquely impact negotiations to a body of literature that has broadly explored the ways that CBAs area carried out in strong local real estate. This article does not aim to dispute the claim that weak market cities present challenges for CBA negotiations; instead, we provide analysis as to how specific barriers to agreements arise from conditions of decline, while also providing insights into the innovations that arise from the Detroit context that may be instructive for other legacy cities.

Literature review: relating CBA success to real estate markets

The literature on CBAs generally proposes that strong market cities are home to the real estate and political dynamics needed to secure robust agreements, with a high degree of implementation and follow through (Gross *et al*., 2002; Wolf-Powers, 2010; Saito and Truong, 2015). Wolf-Powers (2010: 155) has commented on this dynamic, stating that 'the climate for real estate investment in the locality must be robust while bargaining is underway, the public subsidy to the project must be substantial, and the potential for community opposition to derail government support must be great enough to justify developers meeting advocates' demands rather than resisting them or declining to invest'. Much of the difficulty of negotiating benefits relates to the tendency for municipal governments to cater to developers and alter their tax and financial incentives and development policies to make their cities hospitable to investment, which often makes agendas of local governments inconsistent with the desires of communities and their allies (Leavitt, 2006). Conversely, some have argued that community buy-in for a development might in fact be beneficial to developers as they seek a development agreement (Gross *et al*., 2002) However, this presupposes that city officials are in a position to be choosy about which developments they invite—something we explore in this article.

While the literature does not address how and why CBAs occur in weak market cities, there are some case studies that offer some insight at a smaller scale. In Cain's (2014: 949) exploration of the growth machine's navigation of Pittsburgh's Hill District CBA for a sports arena, the neighborhood (not the city as a whole) was seen as 'hard to develop' by developers for reasons of increased development and legal costs and lower rates of profit. A negative perception of the development potential in the neighborhood, paired with community desire to broker a CBA caused some city officials to soften their support of the CBA demands (*ibid*.)—local government support being a key factor in CBA success (Wolf-Powers, 2010). The 2008 recession is also instructive in how less than ideal economic and financial conditions impact the successes of CBAs. In both Seattle and Denver the finalizing of CBAs deteriorated along with broader economic conditions when profit margins became slim and/or city governments were unable to follow through with their subsidies (Wolf-Powers, 2010; Doussard and Schrock, 2022).

The general tendencies outlined in the literature have not been thoroughly observed or tested on legacy cities, with a handful of exceptions. Wolf-Powers (2010) found that in the case of Milwaukee's Park East Redevelopment Corridor agreement, smaller projects being pursued in the city's weaker real estate market caused the community coalition to have a weaker footing in negotiations for employment and affordable housing. Cain also observed the ways that the strength of the local growth coalition may inform a CBA's ability to thrive. She explains (2010: 951) that '[i]n cities with weak local growth coalitions—likely to have a growing population and to lack a well-established political and economic power structure—such community support might be necessary for developers. In cities with strong local growth coalitions, however, such as Pittsburgh, the developer begins with some form of government approval … According to this model, community sector interests are an afterthought for profit- and growth-driven private and public sectors'. Patterson *et al*. (2017: 232) undertook exploratory mixed-methods research to identify which aspects of CBAs (e.g. the sector of the developer, types of benefits, features of negotiations) in environments where 'development options are more limited and developers faces greater resource constraints' (i.e. shrinking cities). They found that the success of agreements in such locales was largely linked to the sector of the developer, with for-profit developers facing limited obligation to engage in negotiations. Ultimately, they propose that policies like Detroit's Community Benefits Ordinance may be especially useful in securing benefits in shrinking cities; on the basis of this work, they call for further exploration at the micro level. Indeed, the existing literature posits that strong real estate markets are advantages for CBAs, but does not deeply explore what the exact outcomes are for CBAs in weak market environments, or the ways that specific aspects of decline might inform such agreements. Our article builds off the efforts of Patterson *et al*. to explore the specific political and economic factors that Detroit has faced as a legacy city with several CBAs, and uncover the unique outcomes and innovations of negotiating in such development climates.

Related to the dispositions of local growth coalitions relative to CBA organizing are concerns that stakeholders other than residents local to the project area—namely, local governments (Parks and Warren, 2009)—may co-opt processes when it is politically and/or economically advantageous to do so. Agreements facilitated by local governments using legislation that requires an agreement to be struck (like Detroit's Community Benefits Ordinance, one of the case studies for this article) are particularly vulnerable to such critiques (Berglund and Butler, 2023). Gross *et al*. (2002: 36) explain that, in the case of legally mandated CBAs, 'the CBA concept is at risk of being co-opted and utilized to develop support for controversial projects, without providing the independent legal enforcement rights and community engagement that are hallmarks of successful CBAs'; this concern is echoed by Parks and Warren (2009). However, some have proposed that the development of government-brokered CBAs as policy is a promising way to mandate community benefits, particularly in places where organically realized CBAs are less politically and economically plausible (Patterson *et al*., 2017). This dynamic may also be present when CBAs are negotiated between groups other than local residents such as developers, local governments and/or politicians acting in what they present as the local community's interest. These negotiations are often done either without community consultation or with the consultation of cherry-picked local residents who agree with the stances of these powerful actors (Gross, 2008).

Methods

This research is a multiple case study based on a content analysis of interviews with relevant stakeholders and documents related to CBA negotiations and development processes. Interview participants belonged to four groups involved in the negotiation for benefits: (1) city or government officials; (2) members of local communities who were involved in negotiations; (3) developers and their staff; and (4) other groups like relevant NGOs and activists familiar with the cases (see Table 1 for sample sizes). Interview questions aimed to address descriptions of the negotiation process, perspectives on the impact and quality of benefits won, perspectives on the fairness and distribution of benefits negotiated, and the role of Detroit's local economic and political climate in negotiations. Relevant documents were identified when they were mentioned in interviews, as well as in records from city council and Detroit Economic Growth Corporation meetings, and reports on negotiations from both the city and community groups. We analyzed the data using the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti to ensure organized and consistent analysis of themes that emerged from interviews and documents. We conducted this analysis both deductively with predetermined themes and inductively by assigning themes as they emerge from the data (Saldaña, 2012). The initial set of coding focused on themes from the literature such as the role of different actors, successes of the agreements, challenges for the agreements, benefits won, and the impact of Detroit's financial state on negotiations. Themes that emerged from the data included the different goals of CBAs, difficulty of realizing employment related benefits, and histories of racialized disenfranchisement from amenities and public goods.

– Case selection strategy

The cases used for this study are: (1) the Gordie Howe International Bridge (GHIB); (2) District Detroit; and (3) the 12 negotiations under Detroit's Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO).[1] These three cases were selected based on the fact that the negotiations for the agreements have been completed and finalized. Though the CBO is ongoing, all 12 agreements completed at the time of data collection were included as cases (see Figure 1 for a diagram of how each agreement is configured and Figure 2 for a map of project locations). The value of considering the processes and outcomes of these agreements is not in a direct, apples-to-apples comparison as there are too many

TABLE 1 Sample size of participants by group and agreement

Case	City/government officials	Local residents involved in negotiation	Developers	Others	Total
Gordie Howe International Bridge	6	5	1	Community advocacy NGO = 1	13
District Detroit	2	3	1	0	6
Community Benefits Ordinance	7	30	5	Activists/CBA advocates = 3	45
Total	15	38	7	4	64

Note: The number of participants per case varies based on the number of individuals directly involved in negotiations (e.g. the 12 Community Benefits Ordinance negotiations involved distinct participants for each project, while the District Detroit Agreement was negotiated by a relatively narrow group of stakeholders)

1 Eleven of the twelve projects negotiated resulted in a finalized agreement, while one process (Cass and York, Fischer Building and Lot 1) was canceled midway and did not result in an agreement.

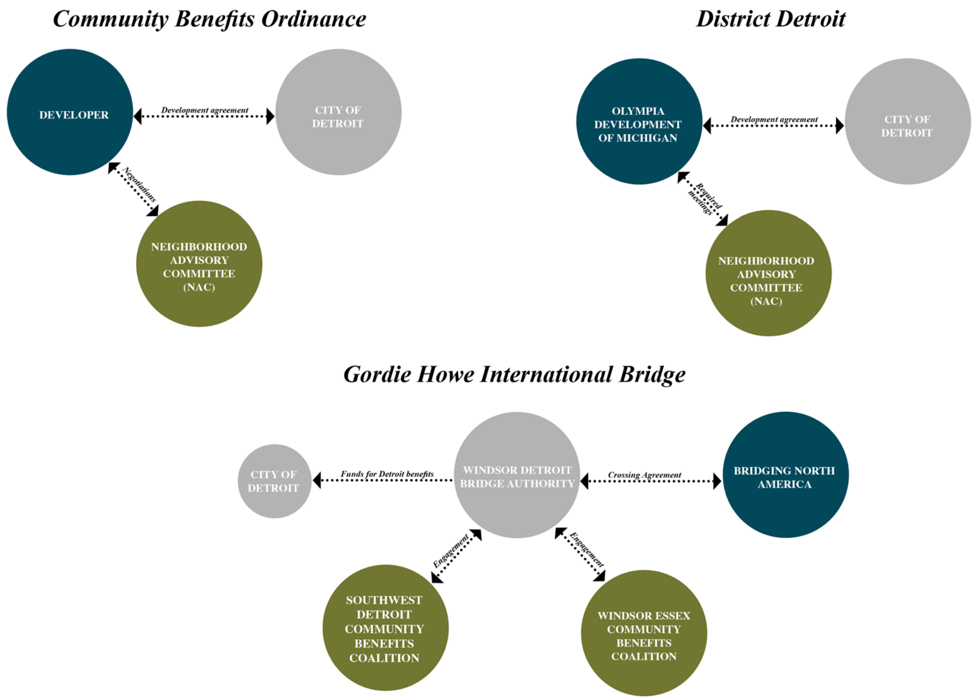

FIGURE 1 The three case-study CBAs were selected to enable analysis of different configurations of agreements between local communities, governments and developers (*source*: graphic produced by the authors)

variables across the agreements to do so. Each of the cases—all taking place in one city—are of use due to the variety of configurations of agreements, the make-up of negotiating parties and the diverse benefits they fought for. An investigation of this variety of agreements allows for insights to be drawn in various contexts regarding specific challenges for community benefits in Detroit, a weak market city, and points to some of the unique outcomes of CBAs in a place that, according to the literature, is an unlikely area for successful agreements.

– GORDIE HOWE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CBA

The Canadian government is funding the $4.5 billion Gordie Howe International Bridge between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario in order to create redundancy with the sole existing border crossing in the area, the privately owned and operated Ambassador Bridge. The benefits associated with the Gordie Howe International Bridge on both sides of the border are complex and layered and involve multiple jurisdictions, including those of the federal government of Canada, the State of Michigan and the City of Detroit; we will focus on the process of establishing the multiple agreements that most directly impact the Delray neighborhood of Detroit.

The Delray neighborhood is located in southwest Detroit, where residents have fought against environmental racism for decades. Organizing for benefits began in 2008 with community engagement to conduct environmental impact assessments for the Detroit and Windsor communities that would house the toll plazas and border crossing which were approved that year. Concerned that engagement was only advisory, community groups got together to begin conversations about what benefits they were going to demand if the bridge was to be sited in their community. The Southwest Detroit

FIGURE 2 Map of Detroit with location of case-study projects, denoting the 7.2 square miles of Greater Downtown (*source*: map produced by the authors and Anna Gorman)

Community Benefits Coalition of stakeholders in the immediate area was assembled, consisting of local community group leaders, business owners, politicians at different levels and labor organizers.

The first opportunity the coalition took to organize for benefits arose out of the $1.4 million land sale of City-owned property to the State of Michigan that would allow the border crossing to be built. This land transfer that the bridge project hinged on was quite contentious, as the plans for the bridge would require the displacement of homeowners from their property in Delray, predicated on, 'the need for City-owned land that wasn't vacant' (interview with organizer, 21 May 2021). When the land was sold, homeowners were bought out and vacated the area. The coalition successfully campaigned for half of the amount the City made from the sale of the land to go towards blight removal in Delray, which we will revisit below, but the displacement of residents to make way for the bridge remained contentious. In 2012, a Crossing Agreement was signed between Canada and the State of Michigan that established the Windsor–Detroit Bridge Authority (WDBA) that mandated a CBA. The WDBA is a Canadian governmental organization responsible for the entire delivery of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project for both Canada and Michigan.

In 2015 the WDBA began community engagement on both sides of the border to determine which benefits should be distributed to communities adjacent to the border crossing. Feedback from the Delray community was used to write procurement documents to search for a private-sector partner, and used in conversations with potential proponents during the procurement phase.[2] The WDBA undertook a

2 In 2017, the Windsor Essex Community Benefits Coalition was formed. Jointly with the United Way and the WDBA, they were able to conduct community engagement and consultation to establish a list of benefits for the Canadian side of the border.

procurement process to find a private-sector partner and arrived at Bridging North America (BNA), 'a consortium of companies that [was] formed to deliver the Gordie Howe Project … entail[ing] constructing it, designing much of it, operating it and managing it for decades' (interview with State official, 29 July 2021). A project agreement was then signed between the WDBA and BNA that stipulated which community benefits should be included, as well as a community benefits agreement between the WDBA, the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan. The Community Benefits Plan that was the result of a community engagement process that included public meetings, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, tours and online engagement, promised a wide range of local jobs and neighborhood infrastructure improvements for both sides of the crossing (Gordie Howe International Bridge, 2019) (for a summary of benefits for all agreements see Table 2). More specifically, the Plan includes a workforce development and participation plan for workers in Canada and the US, bike paths and trails, streetscape improvements, park improvements, greening, and home repair among other items benefitting both Detroit and Windsor residents (*ibid*.). Apart from agreements involving the WDBA, in 2017 the City of Detroit established the Bridging Neighborhoods program that allocates US$32.6 million to provide homes and home repairs for Delray residents who would be impacted by the construction and operation of the toll plaza (interview with City officials, 24 May 2021).

— DISTRICT DETROIT CBA

District Detroit is a $1.4 billion, 50-block entertainment district that houses the Little Caesars arena where the Detroit Pistons basketball team plays, as well as surrounding restaurants and commercial activities that cater to users of the venue.[3] The process of establishing the agreement for District Detroit began in 2011 when a small group of local residents called the Corridor Alliance (a coalition of residents of the adjacent Cass Corridor in Midtown) became aware that Olympia Development of Michigan (ODM) had plans for a new mega development. ODM, a firm owned by the Ilitch Family, was in talks with the City that would make them the developers of an arena that would replace the Joe Louis Arena where the Red Wings played. With the knowledge that Olympia Development was well versed in obtaining public financial incentives for their large-scale developments (ultimately about $400 million in the case of District Detroit (Perkins 2019)), the Alliance began strategizing for benefits.

In 2013, the Corridor Alliance reached out to local residents and business owners to assemble a list of benefits that were the basis for negotiations throughout the process. With the support of City Council Member Raquel Castaneda Lopez, an agreement was struck that required the City to help assemble a Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) made up of 16 elected and Council-appointed members to advocate for community benefits that Olympia Development would be obligated to consider (District Detroit Neighborhood Advisory Committee, 2019). The NAC was advisory, and the benefits were not to be legally binding on their own but were incorporated as part of the development agreement. However, ODM was legally bound to regularly consult with the NAC.

Ultimately, though the NAC advocated for a wide range of benefits through the negotiation process, they focused their efforts on affordable housing, historic preservation, and traffic and parking management. Affordable housing was included in the new development and, simultaneously, independent of the CBA negotiations, they succeeded in gaining approval for the Cass Park and Cass-Henry local historic districts from the City. There were also concerns that the arena and entertainment district would

3 The Cass Corridor is the residential and commercial strip west of Woodward Avenue between Warren Avenue and I-75.

impose parking and traffic difficulties on existing residents, and the NAC negotiated for an ongoing roundtable to continue assessing these challenges.

– DETROIT'S COMMUNITY BENEFITS ORDINANCE

The Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO) is a law that was passed by the voters of Detroit in 2016, which requires developers to engage with a committee of local residents to draft a community benefits agreement for developments. A Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) is created for each CBO project, which consists of nine members of the impacted area who are responsible for directly negotiating with the developer to establish the benefits included in the final development agreement approved by the Detroit City Council. These are determined through about two months of community meetings, and so far, have included a wide variety of benefits (see Table 2).

As stipulated by the Ordinance, seven of the NAC's nine members are selected by City officials,[4] while two are elected by local residents. The two community-elected residents need to nominate themselves or be nominated to make a brief statement about their interest in serving on the NAC at the early CBO meeting where the election take place. These candidates come from a variety of backgrounds. They are often longtime community members, some with a degree of recognition among their neighbors as community leaders. These positions are also sometimes filled by relatively new residents who are looking for a way to become involved in their neighborhood. Some NAC members are also former politicians or have had leadership roles in non-profits, unions or community development organizations; their knowledge at times offered NACs an advantage when it came to knowing what to negotiate for, sometimes offering creative solutions for funding or affordable housing arrangements. In addition to this type of knowledge being embedded in NAC membership, local groups that advocate for equitable development, most prominently Doing Development Differently in Metro Detroit (D4), have provided support. In 2021 D4 launched a resource manual and a training module that has been used by the City and non-profit partners to train NAC members (Butler *et al*., 2021). Once negotiations take place between the NAC and the developer and all parties have signed off on the agreement, City Council votes on whether to include it in the development agreement for the project. The resulting agreement is not a standalone and does not include the NAC or a local community coalition as a signatory.

At the time that data was collected for this research, twelve projects had gone through the negotiation process, and NACs had won about 230 distinct benefits for their communities. NACs have negotiated for many types of benefits, though the key areas of interest have been job opportunities, affordable housing, public space improvements, transportation improvements and management of construction nuisances. These benefits have been won from a diverse set of developments, including historic renovations, mixed-use developments, residential buildings, sports arenas, and manufacturing facilities (see Table 2 for details of developments and benefits). In this sense, each of the agreements under the Ordinance could be considered one of 12 unique CBAs, though under nearly identical structures and parameters. The main ways each of these cases differ are: (1) the developer, (2) the make-up of the NAC, and (3) the area of the City that the associated development is sited in. The following sections describe the unique challenges and outcomes of CBAs in Detroit.

Findings

– The City's thirst for development undermines organizing efforts

The data indicated a hesitance to support strategies for accountable development, like CBAs or the CBO, that might turn off developers. Detroit's urge to

4 The impact area is normally the census tract where the development is located.

TABLE 2 Benefits included in community benefits agreements by project and affordable housing provision

Project	Key benefits won	Affordable housing units
GORDIE HOWE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CBA	Workforce development strategy*; reduction of air-quality impacts*; deed swaps by Bridging Neighborhoods*; landscaping/aesthetic improvements; active transportation safety measures	N/A; housing swap program provided 63 homes to former Delray homeowners displaced by project
DISTRICT DETROIT CBA	Affordable housing*; jobs*; historic preservation*; traffic management/parking*	Commitment to 20% affordable units for households earning 80% AMI; another formulation was negotiated for by NAC unsuccessfully
CBO: PISTONS PRACTICE FACILITY	Community use of facility*; Detroit Public School scholarships*; local hiring*; outdoor basketball courts throughout city	N/A (not a residential development)
CBO: HERMAN KIEFER HOSPITAL	Local hiring for construction*; neighborhood stabilization strategy*; skate park*; security*	No specific commitment; defaults to 20% affordable units for households earning 80% AMI stipulated in the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance
CBO: MIDTOWN WEST	Public space/parks*; affordable housing*; green design	2.5% of rental units affordable for households earning 80% AMI; 5% of rental units affordable for households earning 60% AMI; 2.5% of rental units affordable for households earning 80% AMI
CBO: DETROIT FREE PRESS BUILDING	Bicycle amenities*; Local hiring for construction; historic preservation*; streetscape improvements; notifications of construction activities*	A special agreement between Bedrock (developer) and the City allows for them to distribute 20% affordability for households earning 80% AMI across their portfolio of properties however they choose
CBO: CASS AND YORK/FISHER BUILDING/LOT 1	N/A; agreement incomplete	N/A
CBO: BOOK TOWER/MONROE BLOCKS	Additional NAC communication; sidewalk accessibility/signage*; historic preservation*; notification of construction activities*	A special agreement between Bedrock (developer) and the City allows for them to distribute 20% affordability for households earning 80% AMI across their portfolio of properties however they choose
CBO: HUDSON'S SITE	Continued communication with NAC*; reduce construction nuisances*; local hiring for construction*; security*	A special agreement between Bedrock (developer) and the City allows for them to distribute 20% affordability for households earning 80% AMI across their portfolio of properties however they choose
CBO: LAFAYETTE WEST	Reduce construction nuisances*; parks*; parking management*; security*	No specific commitment; defaults to 20% affordability for households earning 80% AMI stipulated in the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance
CBO: MICHIGAN CENTRAL STATION	Affordable housing*; community development fund*; local hiring for construction*; streetscape improvements*; transportation infrastructure*	$2.5 million invested in affordable housing development fund
CBO: JEFFERSON NORTH ASSEMBLY PLANT	Local hiring/workforce training*; home repair/beautification*; air quality*; affordable housing; recreation center/parks; tech education for youth*	N/A (not a residential development)
CBO: THE MID	Reduce construction nuisances*; Detroit based commercial tenants*; public spaces*	No specific commitment; defaults to 20% affordable units for households earning 80% AMI stipulated in the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance
CBO: MICHIGAN AND CHURCH	Historic preservation*; affordable housing*; parking*; workforce development	10% of rental units affordable for households earning 60% AMI

*Benefits that were community priorities and focal points of negotiations appear business-friendly is a longstanding tradition and is about more than simply being a have-not city when it comes to lucrative development opportunities. An uneven footing when it comes to good-faith negotiations with developers is also related to the racial politics of the city, where an established, White, business community has long accused civil-rights-focused Black mayors of being 'anti-business'. In other words, the optics of socially conscious Black leadership in a majority Black city has been received as threatening to the predominantly White business establishment—the antidote has often been for city administrations to compensate by being overly business-friendly in an effort to correct this image out of concern that development deals could be lost (Hackworth, 2019). These dynamics have also been responsible for provoking very one-sided business-friendly arrangements like the use of eminent domain to clear the Poletown neighborhood for use by General Motors or the tax abatements that have allowed Marathon Petroleum to make neighborhoods of southwest Detroit some of the most polluted in the state (Berglund, 2018; Hackworth, 2019).

A hesitance to demand community benefits lest it repel development was reflected in the narratives repeated by participants, and in the documented behaviors of City actors (and other growth elites like developers, investors and often construction trades unions) that undermined the organizing activities for community benefits. Conversations with participants showed that concerns about development risks and costs, and a several-decades-long public image crisis that has painted the city as a poor, crime-ridden place devoid of investment potential has given both Detroiters and City officials something of an inferiority complex when it comes to development. One narrative was often repeated across participants, including City staff, developers and NAC members: we do not have much to offer developers, therefore, possibly deterring investors by delaying investment or potentially increasing costs through negotiations for community benefits is not a risk we can take.

The narrative that Detroit needs to reduce barriers to investment as much as possible—including being conscious of the 'burden' placed on the process by something like a CBA—was propagated by City officials multiple times throughout our interviews. A City Council member stated his concerns about the prospect of the Community Benefits Ordinance giving developers second thoughts on doing business in Detroit:

> when that's the narrative that you have, that a city adds a year to the development process [through the CBO], that's never a positive. That's going to hinder other developers to invest in your city, and while Detroit has a great story, we're still not the easiest or the most cost-effective place to invest your money, and so we'll have to make sure to create an environment where people want to come in and invest in Detroit (interview with City Councilor, 5 June 2019).

Some developers leveraged this perspective and, in several cases we observed, used extra development hurdles as a rationale to threaten taking their business elsewhere. In a public meeting held by the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation where a transfer of City-owned land needed for the Jefferson North Assembly Plant expansion was being considered, an official from Fiat Chrysler stated that because of the CBO process and the high tax burden, 'the City of Detroit doesn't make sense' for them, since 'it's not an issue anywhere else we do business' (statement made by Russell Stallworth of Fiat Chrysler at public meeting held by the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, 9 May 2019). In a more measured perspective, a staff member from a major development firm located in Detroit that has experience with the CBO from a developer's perspective considered whether the Ordinance might hinder development:

> [If] you wanted to look at doing a project, and Lansing, for example, doesn't have a CBO on the books and doesn't have a set of affordable housing requirements, it doesn't have residential hiring requirements … I don't know if the CBO on its own would necessarily deter a developer, but the whole suite of policies would affect development (interview with developer, 10 July 2019).

These perspectives were also shared by some NAC members, who then approached negotiations from the standpoint that they should not ask for so much that it would hurt the developers' perceptions of Detroit as a good place to do business. These statements often focused on a concern that, if the negotiation process became too lengthy or costly, developers might choose not to invest in the city in the future. One member of Book Tower and Monroe Blocks NAC, which negotiated under the CBO, expressed this fear:

> I could see [developers] thinking, geez, we could go to Lansing, we could go to Grand Rapids, we could go to Cincinnati, we could go any other number of places and not have to worry about that gosh darned Community Benefits Ordinance! (interview with NAC member, 7 June 2019).

A member of The Mid NAC, which also negotiated under the CBO, pointed to concerns about requirements for community benefits potentially derailing the recent uptick in development in Detroit. He said:

> [The CBA] should not serve as a hindrance or road block to get development moving forward in the city of Detroit … There has been little to no development until the last 10, 12 years, where the development pace has really gained momentum … This is finally Detroit's time, it's our opportunity to have investment take place in the city. I would not want these NACs to ever serve as a roadblock in some way to prevent developers from wanting to do business in the city. The last thing I would want is that developers say, 'you know what? We're going to take our business to X city because doing business in Detroit is just too difficult' (interview with NAC member, 28 August 2019).

A staff member of an NGO that promotes equitable development in Detroit put it simply: 'There's a clear market rationale why [developers are] here in Detroit but there's still this mentality of like, you're Detroit, why aren't you on bended knee, thanking your lucky stars that I am here?' (interview with NGO leader, 21 May 2019).

Beyond merely narrative, these attitudes shaped by a scarcity mindset around the investment potential of the City of Detroit have also materialized in actions by the City that have undermined CBAs in several instances. District Detroit is a clear example of this that emerged from the data. It was an agreement forged at a time of economic uncertainty: the City's 2013 bankruptcy. In the case of District Detroit, interviews revealed a perception that City actors were actually quite removed from negotiations with the exception of a couple of key City Council Members who helped to establish the NAC as an advisory body. They recognized that, in the context of a looming bankruptcy, the City would be unlikely to find it politically advantageous to create what might be interpreted as roadblocks for developers, in the form of community benefits. Additionally, the City of Detroit at that point was under emergency management, which in effect made the decisions of the City Council unenforceable unless supported by the Emergency Manager;[5] some members of the Alliance who were interviewed stated that

5 The emergency manager law allows the governor to appoint an emergency financial manager to oversee the finances of cities in financial distress. The emergency manager is tasked with returning city governments to financial solvency and can do so through unilateral action that supersedes the powers of democratically elected officials.

they felt that this context significantly undermined their organizing efforts. One of the community members involved in the CBA from its earliest point said, ‘The specter of a council turning down a jobs creator on a construction site that was of that size, it was just very difficult to surmount something like that … what we got was far, far less than what we wanted’ (interview with NAC member, 27 May 2021). In the end, the City supported the appointment of an NAC that would negotiate for benefits but the final agreement between the developer and the City was not legally binding.

As far as the CBO is concerned, while many significant benefits have been won by local communities, the policy that passed, in its inception, aimed to reduce community impact on development. The Ordinance was initially proposed by the Equitable Development Coalition and called for developments valued at $15 million or more to go through a benefits negotiation process with the host community. If benefits were not delivered on, financial subsidies for the project were to be revoked (Doing Development Differently in Metro Detroit, 2016); this version of the CBO was put on the ballot as Proposal A. However, the features of Proposal A met with resistance from developers, the mayoral administration and some construction trades unions who feared that, if it passed, the proposal would create an unfriendly development climate in the City of Detroit. According to City Council Member Scott Benson, ‘We can’t run all development away and we can’t just willy nilly bring development in and not take into account the voices of the residents who would be impacted’ (One Detroit, 2020). As a response, the mayoral administration, backed by the development community and construction trades unions introduced a competing ordinance that would appear on the ballot as Proposal B. This proposal would apply to projects valued at a higher rate of $75 million or more and receiving $1 million or more in public subsidy, meaning that fewer projects would qualify. Proposal B requires that developers negotiate with a nine-member NAC of largely City-appointed residents to agree on benefits that would be included in the development agreement. Backed with large amounts of advertising dollars and a platform to speak from, in 2016 the advocates of Proposal B were able to convince Detroiters to vote for a more developer-friendly version of the Ordinance, which is the one in place today. A City staff member explained: ‘There was a lot of money and advertising behind Proposal B … both being named “community benefits”, it was somewhat convoluted and confusing to the voters to say the least … The marginal majority actually voted for that with which they were most familiar, which was Proposal B’ (interview with City officials, 2 July 2019).

Because the CBO process exists as a formalized way to, in theory, get City and community voices incorporated into a development agreement, it leaves little opportunity for other community agendas to be heard if they are not part of CBO negotiations; in other words, developers have no reason to negotiate with groups organizing for benefits outside the formal CBO process, since the City has already endorsed an expedited and minimally risky way for communities to extract benefits from development. Extant research in Detroit and elsewhere has found that when CBAs and the process of negotiating for benefits become codified through policy and government processes, the process of securing a development agreement becomes less financially and politically risky, creating little need for a developer to negotiate directly with a community coalition, as the risk of the development being rejected by the City government are greatly reduced (Cain, 2014; Belongie and Silverman, 2018; Berglund and Butler, 2023). This dynamic has also been observed by the director of an equitable development advocacy non-profit, who explained that, in the context of the CBO, ‘the developer is incentivized to only negotiate with City officials and the NAC, rather than wider community campaigns outside of the NAC. This results in potentially undermining more grassroots and “organic” community benefit campaigns’ (personal communication with NGO leader, 28 February 2024). The potential chilling effect that the CBO has on other campaigns for accountable development is perhaps evidenced by the fact that in the nearly ten years since the policy was put into place, there has not been explicit mobilization for CBAs outside of it—even though the number of large-scale developments has increased since then. However, this does not necessarily mean that the innovation of other strategies for accountable development, not explicitly named CBAs, is curtailed by this policy. In addition to the direct gains of benefits won through negotiations, some participants felt that the CBO sets an important precedent in reframing discussions around development in Detroit, with a representative of the Legislative Policy Division saying, 'I think it makes [developers] come with a greater respect for Detroiters … I think this process lets them know that there is a standard in the City of Detroit to be ready to speak to people, be ready to come correctly, and make sure you dot all your I's and cross all your T's' (personal communication with Legislative Policy Division staff members, 2 July 2019).

There were also times when the power of NACs was undermined due to special arrangements made in development agreements that were solidified before CBO processes or by other agreements made between the City and the developer. For example, before the Detroit Free Press Building NAC was even assembled, a memorandum of understanding between the City and the developer was signed that outlined the benefits they were required to provide, without community input. Another example is an agreement that the City has made with Bedrock Development, a prominent developer in Detroit that owns over 100 properties in downtown alone. The City and Bedrock have an agreement that, instead of complying with the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance that requires 20% of housing units to be affordable to households earning 80% or less of the area median income (AMI) on a project-by-project basis, they are permitted to meet housing requirements across their entire portfolio of properties.

– Polarized development and socioeconomic conditions make it difficult to distribute benefits

The polarization of Southwest Michigan's landscape—both in terms of investment in new developments and socioeconomic characteristics—creates challenges for distributing benefits across the population. The geographic polarization within the city that places almost all new developments within the downtown core is what investment patterns look like in the market rebound of a city that has faced extreme land abandonment; the magnitude of this uneven development is specific to declining cities. In these settings of extreme abandonment, entrepreneurial land management strategies, which are a dominant development paradigm in growing as well as shrinking cities, aim to attract investment through tax abatements, tax increment financing and other similar mechanisms. Even when these are used, the investment risks in areas with many vacancies or derelict properties are simply too high to justify development. According to Hackworth (2019: 152), in declining cities, 'There has been some success in the past fifty years at luring corporations to downtown using such measures … By contrast, these measures have an unambiguously dismal record in more distressed residential sections of cities'. The reasons for development polarization at the regional level are also related to the city's decline, fueled by a history of racial prejudice. This lack of cooperation on a regional scale, for example, the failed attempts to establish regional rail transit (Grengs, 2010), have exacerbated uneven development in Southwest Michigan. Historically and presently, the mayors of Detroit's suburbs have gained political capital based on racial animus and resistance to collaboration with the City of Detroit, oftentimes 'build[ing] their reputations on racial segregation' (Thomas, 1997: 86).

While CBAs are necessarily located in places with development interest and therefore disproportionately awarding benefits to the populations of such areas in many cities, Detroit's characteristics could be considered unique in terms of the degree of social and spatial contrasts that can be observed across the region. An especially polarized development landscape—where virtually all large-scale ($10 million or more) development projects are taking place in the downtown area—has limited the ability of benefits to be distributed across the city by placing amenities offered through CBAs in the particularly small area of the city with large scale investment potential (see Figure 3).[6] The uneven distribution of CBA benefits mirrors the uneven distribution of investment dollars in the city, over $5.6 billion of which have been reinvested into Greater Downtown since 2010 (Ramirez and Dickson, 2021).[7] Of the 12 projects that had undergone the CBO negotiation process at the time of data collection, all but two are inside the investment-concentrated 7.2 square miles of Greater Downtown (see Figure 4); this area has been described by the Hudson Webber foundation as an economically viable space that 'has attracted thousands of new employees and hundreds of new residents, demonstrating a healthy demand for the mix of renovation and new projects that are in the development pipeline' (Mahoney *et al*., 2015: 13). This area is also home to the largest gains in college educated residents (a significant marker of gentrification) (see Figure 4). The fact that gentrification has gone hand in hand with concentrated reinvestment is easily predicted however, the concentration of this investment into 7.2 square miles of the 142 square miles of the city with no other nodes of development at remotely the same magnitude is significant. Because of the highly polarized development landscape of Detroit, the value threshold for CBO projects ($75 million or more) necessarily locates decisions around benefits in communities that are already seeing a renewed interest in residential amenities and resources that may improve quality of life. This geographic disparity in development across the city also relates to a dynamic where residents who are affluent enough to live in Greater Downtown are more keyed into the networks needed to become a NAC member to negotiate under the CBO.[8] Berglund and Butler (2021) found that this population frequently uses their social and professional connections to the Planning and Development Department and other City agencies to secure positions on NACs, skewing the educational attainment and professional connections of NACs away from those of the average Detroiter (echoing findings elsewhere; see Molotch and Logan, 1984; Wolf-Powers, 2022). These disparities within the city of Detroit are also illustrated by the facts that Berkeley's Othering and Belonging Institute found that Detroit was the most segregated US city of 200,000 people or more (Othering and Belonging Institute, 2023), and that Detroit also has the highest poverty rate of cities of 100,000 or more (DePietro, 2021).

This dynamic is also nested within regional socioeconomic disparities that make it difficult to distribute benefits. There is a significant wealth disparity between the residents of Detroit and those of surrounding, more affluent suburbs. This is important when it comes to the difficulty of realizing two key benefits that are cornerstones of CBA negotiations in other cities: jobs and housing. Detroit's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance requires residential developments above a certain size to make 20% of units affordable to households earning 80% of the area median income. However, the area median income includes far wealthier suburban households of Wayne County outside of the city boundaries. This is a common challenge and critique of the use of 80% AMI as a standard

6 In 2021 the City Council considered a list of 17 proposed amendments to the Ordinance that community groups and equitable development nonprofits campaigned for in hopes of a fairer representation of Detroit residents in the negotiation process. Related to the above-mentioned spatial and socioeconomic disparities, an amendment calling for a reduction in the value threshold for a project to be required to go through CBO negotiations from $75 million to $50 million dollars was considered. The amendment was not passed, but even if it had been, it would have made virtually no difference in terms of the census tracts represented through the negotiation process.

7 Greater Downtown or the 7.2 square mile area includes the neighborhoods of Downtown, Midtown, Woodbridge, Eastern Market, Lafayette Park, Rivertown and Corktown and is often presented as a uniquely viable investment landscape in the City of Detroit (see Mahoney *et al*., 2015).

8 The tendency for benefits to be concentrated in areas where there is investment potential and that are already seeing a boost in value is not unique to Detroit. Noting this disparity, the City of Chicago instated the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund that allows for funds from investments in development-rich areas downtown to provide grants for other areas of the city (Neighborhood Opportunity Fund 2024).

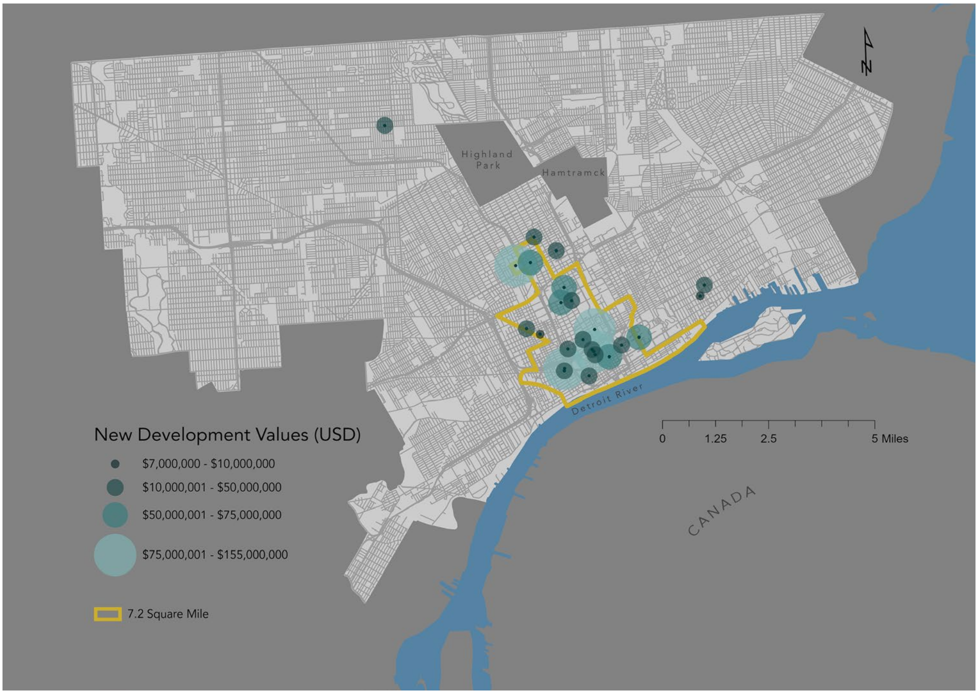

FIGURE 3 New large-scale (>$10 million in value) developments planned in Detroit, as reported by *The Detroit News*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *Crain's Detroit Business*, and *Curbed Detroit* (*source*: map produced by the authors and Anna Gorman)

of affordability, however, the regional socioeconomic disparities in Detroit make it particularly problematic there. To illustrate, someone earning 80% of the AMI in Wayne County earns $57,223 (US Census Bureau, 2023b); the same family in Detroit earns $37,761 (US Census Bureau, 2023a).[9]

When it comes to the affordable housing benefits listed in the nine CBAs studied that include residential units, seven included an acknowledgement that the developer would adhere to the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance requirements; only two of them included a reconfiguration of this requirement that stipulated deeper affordability accessible to households earning a lower percentage of AMI to better fit with Detroit's income profile. Both of these NACs (Midtown West and Michigan and Church) included community organizers and former politicians who had previous knowledge of this regional income disparity and were able to negotiate with the aim of mitigating it (see Tables 2 and 3; also see Saito (2012) on the significance of development expertise elsewhere). Negotiating for deeper affordability for fewer units required tenacity, creativity and a knowledge of affordable housing. In the case of Midtown West, NAC members felt they were also negotiating against the City staff for affordable housing. One said:

> the depressing thing was that it was just very clear, or it felt clear to me, that people were not thinking about affordable housing like a cohesive goal of having economically integrated neighborhoods … it was more like, 'we [the

9 By comparison, an individual earning 80% of the City of Los Angeles' median income earns $66,728 annually and an individual earning 80% of the metro area median income earns $60,996 (US Census Bureau 2023c)

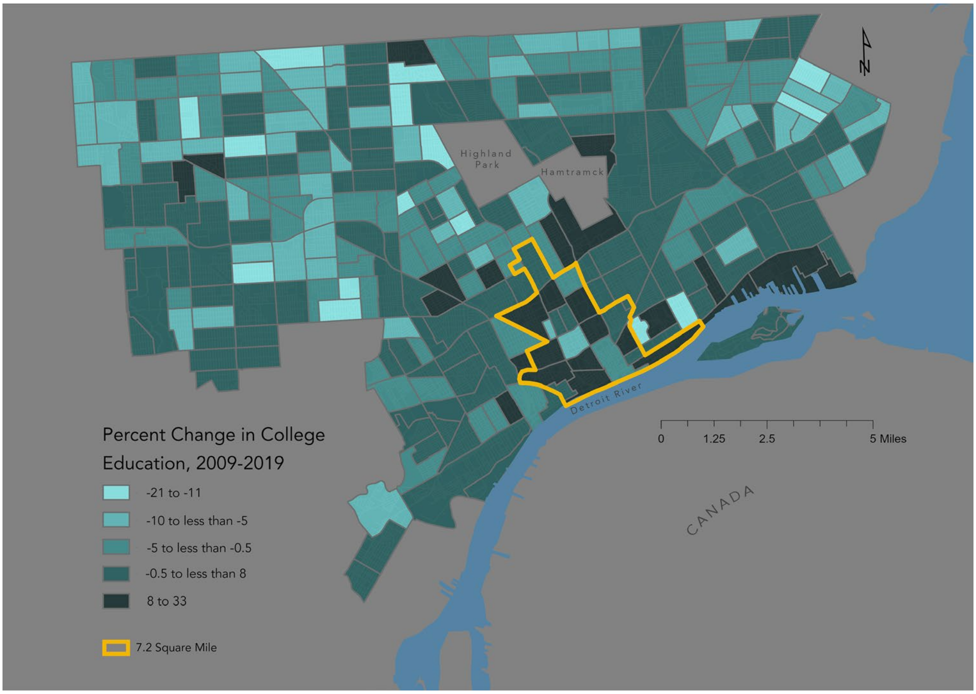

FIGURE 4 Map of Detroit showing a concentration of increasing college-educated residents in Greater Downtown (the 7.2 square miles bounded in yellow) (*data source*: US Census)

> City] have this formula, and you guys want to make it difficult by tweaking the formula' (interview with NAC member, 9 July 2019).

The ways that affordable housing is approached in agreements has largely not grappled with the severe regional income disparity. Developers fall back on a standard of affordability that might make sense in cities with less income disparity, but does not match the city's income characteristics. They are implicitly supported by the City in doing so, making it difficult for NACs to negotiate for deeper affordability. A similar concern exists for local hiring for construction and manufacturing jobs, which are mostly staffed by suburban union members (interview with City staff member, 12 July 2019; interview with NAC member, 2 July 2021). The following section described this employment disparity.

– Local hiring is not achieved through agreements due to historic and structural issues

For a variety of reasons related to the city's long-term economic crisis, CBAs in Detroit have struggled to secure what is often a cornerstone of community benefits negotiations elsewhere: jobs. Developing a construction workforce in Detroit, like many cities, has been challenging due to the historically racist practices of skilled trades unions and segregation that reduces access to jobs (Sugrue, 2005; Grengs, 2010; Hackworth, 2019). Cities such as New Orleans, Boston, Portland and San Francisco have attempted to leverage targeted hiring programs aimed at addressing the spatially disparate and racialized opportunities for employment with different degrees of success (Belongie and Silverman, 2018; Doussard and Schrock, 2022). However, the degrees of

TABLE 3 Projects described according to use, construction cost, NAC makeup and timeframe for negotiations

Agreement	Project description	Construction costs	Community/NAC makeup	Timeframe of negotiation
GORDIE HOWE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CBA	International border crossing (toll plaza and bridge)	About $4.8 billion (6.4 billion CAD)	Southwest Detroit Community Benefits Coalition, consisting of local community group leaders, business owners, politicians at different levels, and labor organizers*	4 years (Community Benefits Coalition was established in 2014 and the Project Agreement was made in 2018)
DISTRICT DETROIT CBA	Entertainment district with stadium, retail and housing	$1.5 billion	Initiated by Corridor Alliance; Negotiations done by a mix of 16 community elected and City Council appointed members	The NAC was assembled, and the developer was required to consult with them over the course of five years (2014-2019)
CBO: PISTONS PRACTICE FACILITY	Athletic facility	$90 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	5 weeks (March 2017-April 2017)
CBO: HERMAN KIEFER HOSPITAL	Rehabilitation of hospital for mixed uses	$143 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	8 weeks (April 2017-May 2017)
CBO: MIDTOWN WEST	New mid-rise residential construction	$77 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	11 months (May 2017-July 2017; resumed December 2017-April 2018
CBO: DETROIT FREE PRESS BUILDING	Rehabilitation of mid-rise historic building for mixed uses	$113 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	4 weeks (June 2017-July 2017)
CBO: CASS AND YORK/FISHER BUILDING/LOT 1	New residential development and renovation of historic high- rise	Fisher Building: $30 million; other projects unrealized	Chosen according to CBO policy**	N/A
CBO: BOOK TOWER/MONROE BLOCKS	Rehabilitation of historic high-rise and new construction for mixed uses	$317 million (Book Tower) $800 million (Monroe Blocks)	Chosen according to CBO policy**	7 weeks (August 2017-October 2017)
CBO: HUDSON'S SITE	New high-rise construction	$1.4 billion	Chosen according to CBO policy**	4 weeks (September 2017-October 2017)
CBO: LAFAYETTE WEST	New mid-rise residential construction	$150 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	7 weeks (July 2018-August 2018)
CBO: MICHIGAN CENTRAL STATION	Rehabilitation of historic train station (high-rise) for use as research campus	$740 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	10 weeks (July 2018-August 2018)
CBO: JEFFERSON NORTH ASSEMBLY PLANT	Expansion of Fiat-Chrysler (now Stellantis) manufacturing plant	$900 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	5 weeks (March 2019-April 2019)
CBO: THE MID	Mid-rise new construction for mixed uses	$310 million	Chosen according to CBO policy**	7 weeks (April 2019-June 2019)
CBO: MICHIGAN AND CHURCH	Mid-rise new construction for mixed uses	$71 million***	Chosen according to CBO policy**	10 weeks (March 2021-May 2021)

*These are the actors involved on the Detroit side of negotiations; the Windsor groups are different and outside of the scope of this research
**3 members chosen by city councillors; 2 members elected by fellow residents; 4 members chosen by the Planning and Development Department
***The developers of the Michigan and Church development are under the $75 million threshold that triggers the CBO, but they opted into the negotiation process

both segregation and poverty in Detroit, and the cascading effects of depopulation and revenue loss on vital City and social services uniquely inform the challenges of securing jobs through CBAs.

Among the CBAs in this study, three NACs—Midtown West, Lafayette West and The Mid—never proposed jobs of any kind as a benefit. Five NACs negotiated for local residents to be hired for maintenance operations and service jobs related to the new development after it had been completed, with various degrees of intensity. For example, the Detroit Pistons Practice Facility employs 220 neighborhood residents (more than the agreed to 150), while the agreement for the Detroit Free Press building includes hiring 10 local employees for operations (Cox and Lewis, 2017; Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department, 2020a). Six NACs proposed that local hiring for construction be included as a benefit, but were countered by the developer stating that there was already a policy on the books requiring local hiring. A 2014 Executive Order (EO) calls for 51% construction hours to be logged by Detroit residents for projects receiving above a certain threshold of public financial subsidies (City of Detroit, 2014). These six CBAs ended up counting an intent to follow existing laws on local hiring as a benefit in and of itself. However, for many developers, due to labor shortages this mark was quite difficult to meet, leading them to pay penalties instead of meeting the requirement. The final report for the Detroit Free Press building that lists attempting to meet the requirements of the EO as a benefit states, 'Concerns were raised regarding the 51% of Detroit residents that are required to be involved in the construction work for the site ... The Developer responded by expressing that they currently struggle with meeting the 51% mandate for construction workers to be Detroiters because there is a shortage of skilled tradesmen in the city' (Cox and Lewis, 2017: 6). Because labor shortages make it nearly impossible to meet the 51% requirement in Detroit, we found that all six CBAs that included following the Executive Order as a benefit were ultimately required to pay this fine for coming up short (see Table 4). Local construction hiring generally ranged from 8%–25%, with one outlying project (the Hudson's Site) achieving 43% local hiring.

Seven projects were required to pay such fines, totaling about $5.6 million. The fines levied for hiring shortfalls are used by the quasi-governmental organization Detroit at Work to support workforce development for Detroiters. Detroit at Work hosts job fairs, provides information and guidance on pursuing various career paths, posts jobs, and provides resources to help with the interview process, such as procuring necessary IDs, transportation, interview training and resume writing. Detroit at Work also provides scholarships and mentorship for Detroiters hoping to enter the workforce or change careers, and makes specific efforts to support groups who may find it especially difficult to become employed, such as people who have been incarcerated.

While diversity in the workforce and spatial segregation have played a role in the challenges for local hiring elsewhere (as described above), the reasons for Detroit's shortfalls and their magnitude relate directly to its fraught social and economic realities. Historic structural disparities impede workforce development, contributing greatly to these shortfalls. One major factor is a lack of funding for Detroit Public Schools that would prepare the Detroit construction workforce for jobs from new development. According to a staff member working on the Mayor's workforce development team:

> The School District has failed an entire generation of children for a lot of different reasons. So we see that even adults, who may have graduated from high school and have a diploma, are still struggling with some of the basic math skills that they need to obtain employment … That's one of our main challenges … a lot of people didn't graduate from high school, but even those that did sometimes don't have the skills that you would expect them to have if they went [to school] somewhere else (interview with City staff member, 12 July 2019).

TABLE 4 Hiring commitments and fees paid in lieu of meeting the hiring requirements set out in the Executive Order

Project	Local hiring	Fines in lieu of EO compliance
GORDIE HOWE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CBA	2,500 jobs (direct hires and subcontractors) between Windsor and Detroit residents; broad agreement to carry out workforce development for operations and maintenance jobs after completion of bridge.	N/A; hiring requirement not subject to EO
DISTRICT DETROIT CBA	Agreement acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours (or fines in lieu)	25% construction hours by Detroit residents; developer paid $5.2 million in fines
CBO: PISTONS PRACTICE FACILITY	Agreement acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours (or fines in lieu); job fair for to learn about project hiring opportunities (construction and post-construction)	10.2% construction hours by Detroit residents; developer paid $94,390 in fines
CBO: HERMAN KIEFER HOSPITAL	No specific agreement; CBA mentions 'obligation' and 'interest' in local hiring; reports are vague as to what was accomplished; broad plan to hire local residents for operations and maintenance	Unknown
CBO: MIDTOWN WEST	Not requested by NAC	Unknown
CBO: DETROIT FREE PRESS BUILDING	Agreement acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours (or fines in lieu); small amount of operations and maintenance jobs	Unknown
CBO: CASS AND YORK/FISHER BUILDING/LOT 1	N/A; agreement incomplete	N/A
CBO: BOOK TOWER/MONROE BLOCKS	Agreement acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours (or fines in lieu)	**Book Tower**: 12% construction hours by Detroit residents; developer paid $181,097 in fines **Monroe Blocks**: 8.5% construction hours by Detroit residents; paid $9,780 in fines
CBO: HUDSON'S SITE	Agreement acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours (or fines in lieu)	43% construction hours by Detroit residents; developer paid $11,758 in fines
CBO: LAFAYETTE WEST	Not requested by NAC	Unknown
CBO: MICHIGAN CENTRAL STATION	$5 million committed to tech workforce development programs for Detroiters; acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours; local hiring hall for post-construction tech sector jobs on site	Met 8% construction hours by Detroit residents; developer paid $48,976 in fines
CBO: JEFFERSON NORTH ASSEMBLY PLANT	$18.8 million committed to various approaches to increase Detroit's manufacturing workforce	N/A
CBO: THE MID	Not requested by NAC	Unknown
CBO: MICHIGAN AND CHURCH	Agreement acknowledges hiring EO that requires 51% locally hired construction hours (or fines in lieu); agreement to work with City to submit a local hiring plan for hotel on site	39.5% of construction hours by Detroit residents; developer paid $37,461 in fines

Detroit has among the lowest high school graduation rates in the country at 71% in 2022, up from 64% in 2021 (Detroit Public Schools, 2022). Since the city began to lose population, lowering enrolment numbers has reduced per pupil funding, with Detroit Public Schools (DPS) revenues ever dropping. Compounding this, plummeting property values in the city (whose property taxes funded DPS until 1994 when the funding model changed) generated more shortfalls in revenue that were never corrected under the new state-managed funding model. The lack of revenue and the amount of debt and debt services DPS carries present tremendous barriers for K-12 education access: the first decade of the 2000s saw over 100 school closures and the lay-off of over 10,000 (55%) of DPS teachers (Hammer, 2011). Also contributing to low graduation rates are the dire transportation challenges for many households in Detroit. A Wayne State University study found that more than half of DPS students were chronically absent (meaning that they missed 10% or more of class time) with the main contributing factor being unavailability of reliable transportation (via transit or a vehicle) to get children to school (Winchell Lenhoff *et al*., 2021). When barriers linked to poverty and the outcomes of ruinous municipal finances of Detroit reinforce patterns of absenteeism, so the cycle of lowering enrollment, reduced funding, and ultimately school closures continues—leaving even fewer opportunities to graduate from high school and get a construction trades job.

A lack of transportation options is, incidentally, a major barrier for employment, even when Detroiters have completed high school. A historically regionally divided and underfunded bus system that many Detroiters perceive as 'inefficient' and 'unreliable', is the lone transit option within the city limits (Grengs, 2015: 103). Paired with the 24% of households with no access to a private vehicle (as compared to 9% nationally), getting to the workplace is difficult and, in some cases, prohibitive for employment (Grengs, 2015). Other interrelated accessibility issues for the workforce include the high cost of car insurance in Detroit, and a shortage of childcare workers and services that make securing and keeping jobs from CBAs (and jobs in general) very challenging for many (interview with City staff member, 12 July 2019). Detroit has the highest unemployment rate among the country's fifty most populated cities (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).

An additional hurdle to securing construction jobs has been that the specialized social and professional networks required to gain apprenticeships that often leave Detroiters out have resulted in a shortfall of skilled trades workers in the city. A Detroit at Work staff member explained the challenging pathway into the construction trades for Detroiters:

> When you think about the historical pathways into construction, it's sort of a friends and family industry. It was one that had a lot of stated and unstated racial issues. So, it's like if you are part of a union and you generally are only communicating how to get into it … to the people you know and your membership is not diverse, then people in Detroit are systematically kept out of certain industries, or they're kept at a certain level (interview with City staff member, 12 July 2019)

The above barriers, taken together, paint a picture of how and why such a significant shortfall from the required 51% of construction hours being worked by Detroit residents are not easily addressed through CBAs or the efforts made by developers over the course of a project. In this sense, jobs negotiated through CBO agreements, or more accurately the EO, most directly benefit others in the suburban areas of the region rather than Detroiters themselves, though fees in lieu of local hiring have contributed to local workforce development.

Despite the difficulty of navigating structurally rooted labor shortages and conflict with construction trades, three CBAs managed to align benefits with the deep-seated labor challenges in Detroit. However, to successfully incorporate employment related provisions into agreements, developers devoted significant amounts of capital and needed to work with the City and NACs to devise long-term strategic plans for how to meet these commitments. Three agreements—the Gordie Howe International Bridge, Michigan Central Station and the Jefferson North Assembly Plant Expansion—pursued workforce development and employment benefits in this way. The Gordie Howe International Bridge agreement included a long-term strategy for 'workforce development', 'training' and 'pre-apprenticeships/apprenticeships' for Detroiters and Windsorites and a commitment to collaborate with local workforce development agencies and non-profits and technical schools to do so (Bridging North America, 2018: 1026). The Bridge agreement included a stipulation that a specific percentage of the overall cost of the project would be designated for these activities. However, this percentage is redacted in public documents (Bridging North America, 2018), and annual reports do not specify how successful this recruitment has been to date (Windsor–Detroit Bridge Authority, 2024).

In the case of the renovation of Michigan Central Station, NAC members, some of whom had backgrounds in local politics and community organizing, were able to negotiate for significant investments in workforce development. These included contributions to the local Golightly Career Technical Education Center, a local hiring hall for area residents for jobs at the completed project, and other workforce development items such as 'scholarships for youth pursuing STEAM careers, potential internships … and/or community programs to be decided upon with community input' (Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department, 2022: 3). The final agreement includes \$5 million devoted to these items. As of the 2022 biannual report, most of these benefits have been realized, with arrangements for a local hiring hall still in progress. In another example, the Jefferson North Assembly Plant Expansion project boasted that it would create nearly 5,000 manufacturing jobs that would be available to Detroiters (Planning and Development Department, 2018). To prepare Detroiters to access such jobs, the CBA included an agreement that Fiat Chrysler would contribute \$18.8 million to Detroit at Work. Ultimately, this campaign to prepare Detroiters for the Plant's manufacturing jobs were successful and 4,100 were hired (Noble, 2020). When all the agreements are taken into account, workforce shortages caused by long-term structural forces that have marginalized Detroiters from employment opportunities in construction and manufacturing sectors that are associated with new developments fall into one of two extremes: either developers fail to meet the City's requirements to hire Detroiters by a long shot and pay fines in lieu of this, or they must invest significant amounts of capital into long term solutions and workforce development.

– Historic pattern of disinvestment and neglect addressed through CBAs

Detroit's struggles with issues like vacancy and maintaining public infrastructure and amenities have generated opportunities for CBAs to be leveraged to support investments in neglected items in ways that could be considered unique innovations. Benefits that aim to reallocate historic inequalities have included air quality regulation and monitoring, blight removal, rehabilitation of defunct or disinvested community amenities (e.g. parks, sidewalks), residential relocation and home repair. These are unique compared to other types of benefits present in agreements that can be characterized as mitigation of temporary construction nuisances (e.g. signage, window cleaning, limited construction hours) and, aesthetic and experientially based amenities that are enjoyed by residents and visitors but also serve to enhance property and development values (e.g. historic preservation, landscaping and parking). The introduction of benefits that channel private resources from developers to remedy the neglect of historically disinvested public infrastructure and the physical decay of neighborhoods resulting from the city's economic crisis is broadly speaking a unique outcome of Detroit CBAs.

Because of the aspects of spatial polarization described earlier, CBA projects that are located outside Greater Downtown are more likely to center their negotiations on remedying neglect arising from the city's economic crisis. Some NAC members were explicit about their intention to bring historic neglect and disinvestment into the discussion. A NAC member negotiating with Fiat Chrysler for the Jefferson North Assembly Plant Expansion described her attitude towards negotiations and an obligation for developers to confront these issues, namely the need for neighborhood stabilization:

> Well, how could you really come to this particular area, and know the history of it and not want to put [money] into housing? Like, where would the mindset be to come here to expand your plant, but not put any money into outside of the plant, to build the structure, or the neighborhood? So if it's going down, you don't stabilize anything? … The Fiat heads don't know the history of the actual neighborhood in which you've been to know how you want to build in the next 30 years (interview with NAC member, 17 August 2019).

From this concern about historic neglect and disinvestment sometimes came innovative results that are uniquely possible and necessary due to Detroit's history of disinvestment in many aspects of public infrastructure and amenities. However, some discussion around reparations through benefits have begun to make their way into accountable development discourse elsewhere (Wolf-Powers, 2022).

These types of benefits were the main focuses for three agreements, which were all located outside of Greater Downtown: the Gordie Howe International Bridge, the Jefferson North Assembly Plant Expansion, and the redevelopment of the Herman Kiefer Hospital. An example of where Detroit's unique conditions of large amounts of vacancy and low property values generated innovative benefits happened through the negotiations for the Gordie Howe International Bridge project. The land transfer that would make way for the Bridge required the buyout of homeowners who then needed new housing opportunities. Part of the funding secured through the land transfer agreement between the State and the City was negotiated to be used to carry out 'deed swaps' with residents living adjacent to the new Bridge. This allowed remaining residents living adjacent to the environmental hazards and the decreasing property values of the Bridge to 'swap' their Delray homes for renovated land bank properties in other areas of the city. Ultimately, 63 households were relocated into a renovated land bank home through the program (interview with City staff members, 24 May 2021). The large amount of land bank properties available to carry out the swap is related to the city's complex history of vacancy, abandonment and tax foreclosure. Such a swap might face further hurdles if attempted in a city with a more competitive real estate market. The Bridge agreement also included a Neighborhood Infrastructure Strategy for the Delray neighborhood where 23 million CAD was committed to the improvement of the Sandwich (Windsor) and Delray (Detroit) neighborhoods on items like home repair, tree planting, new bus stops, street lighting, improvements to City-owned parks, and upgrades to trail networks (Windsor–Detroit Bridge Authority, 2024; Gordie Howe International Bridge, 2020). This funding is intended to provide Delray with needed improvements for residents of the area that were not bought out but still experiencing the loss of property values and amenities, and physical decay of their neighborhood since the city's decline began.

Similar funds were won through the Jefferson North Assembly Plant Expansion agreement, where NAC members became concerned that the expansion would further depreciate their land values (interview with NAC member, 17 August 2019). The plant was built in an already industrialized area, prompting the NAC members who represented the largely Black and working-class homeowners of the impact area to request blight removal, home repair grants and increased regulation of air quality. The NAC of the Herman Kiefer Hospital also leveraged negotiations to require the developer to rehabilitate 20% of land-bank-owned vacant homes on the lot where the development sits and maintain other land bank properties on the site through landscaping (Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department, 2020b). This project was carried out through a request for proposal (RFP) by the City on City-held land, so the developer's maintenance is another example of NACs leveraging private funds from developers to carry out actions that the City is unable to. The popular inclusion of home repair funds as benefits is not an entirely unique innovation to Detroit CBAs, but is rare in other agreements.

In several instances, NACs negotiated specifically for the upgrading of green spaces that Detroit has not had the funds to maintain. Parks across the city have been historically neglected—to the point that Detroit has gained a reputation as 'returning to nature' due to the overgrowth of green spaces. Neighborhood groups have even formed where residents have taken it upon themselves to mow grass in parks and green spaces where the City is too underfunded and understaffed to do so (Vogel, 2005; Kinder, 2016; Rahal, 2020;). The Herman Kiefer hospital is located outside of the downtown core near the North End neighborhood and has experienced disinvestment in residential amenities like parks and infrastructure, and therefore negotiated for funding for the demolition of derelict structures and the rehabilitation of a large publicly owned park that had fallen into disrepair. This included restoration of baseball fields, basketball courts and tennis courts (Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department, 2020b). In the case of the Midtown West development, the project was realized through a City RFP to develop on a seven-acre decommissioned public park site. Concerned about a lack of public parks in their community, NAC members negotiated for improvements to several smaller parks in the area (interview with NAC member, 29 July 2019; Planning and Development Department, 2017). Through the Detroit Piston's Practice Facility negotiations, NAC members were concerned that the new development would exclude the local community that was in need of spaces for athletic or community programming. While it was not feasible for NAC members to negotiate much in the way of access to the Facility itself, other than Pistons tickets and other smaller benefits, they were able to win the restoration of 60 publicly owned basketball courts across the city that had fallen into disrepair as a benefit (interview with NAC member, 4 June 2019).

Conclusion

The literature on CBAs is largely in agreement that communities in strong market cities are better positioned to secure benefits through CBAs and for those agreements to be implemented. With a few exceptions, this literature has not yet explored how legacy cities have secured CBAs and what the specific challenges and outcomes of agreements in such places are. In other words, the extant literature lacks a micro-scale analysis of CBAs in weak market cities (Patterson *et al*., 2017).

As suspected in, but not fully explored by, extant literature, a desire and desperation for new development by the city's growth elites often undermined NACs' ability to request benefits and was deeply engrained in the perspectives of interviews from all stakeholder groups we spoke with. This aligned with times when the City and other actors promoted policies and practices that undermined benefits campaigns. We found that several barriers prevented CBAs from securing the benefits of affordable housing and jobs. Due to a deep regional wealth disparity and segregation within the city limits, CBAs often did not secure affordable housing benefits (based on percentage of units available to households at a given percent AMI) that were tailored to the average Detroiter. Amidst this polarization, organizers in legacy cities might consider how their negotiations can yield benefits that can be distributed across the city, inclusive of non-gentrifying areas. They might take a cue from Chicago's Neighborhood Opportunity Fund that aims to redistribute fees from downtown development by funding small business grants in communities not readily benefitting from such development.

A historically racially discriminatory relationship between residents of the majority Black city and construction trades unions also kept Detroiters from securing jobs in the sector; this issue was compounded by the structural collapse of Detroit institutions like public transit and Detroit Public Schools that made it difficult to access jobs. This analysis might be leveraged by organizers who would be better served by not only negotiating for jobs as benefits, but also benefits that might mitigate major barriers to employment in Detroit, such as transportation, childcare and schooling at multiple levels.

In light of decades of disinvestment in city services and infrastructure, we found that Detroiters often used the promise of private investment dollars to mitigate the impacts of municipal neglect, physical decay and general economic hardship. They did so by innovating uses for and reinvestment in land bank properties, negotiating for home repair funds, and generating benefits that would repair neglected public parks and amenities—many of which Detroiters have been caring for on their own time and expense over the years. This provides an important lesson for organizers in legacy cities whose CBA negotiations might be well leveraged towards repairing infrastructure and restoring services that have been neglected. This may also include reparative approaches to a wealth gap that has widened due to factors like illegal foreclosure and lack of access to higher education in this legacy city; other possibilities are co-operative ownership models, land trusts or revenue-sharing agreements that extract wealth from the development. These findings do not dispute or debunk any claims made about the difficulties of negotiating for benefits in a weak market city, but instead shed light on the historic disparities and current political attitudes and priorities that make this so. Our findings also point to creative innovations in the types of benefits that are made possible in such environments that may be instructive in other economically similar cities.

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