



2018: A Pivotal Year for the Michigan State Fairgrounds

The State Fairgrounds Development Coalition (SFDC) anticipates that 2018 will be a turning point for the development of the Michigan State Fairgrounds. According to Director Josh Burgett, the Michigan Land Bank “Fast Track” Authority (MLBA) hopes to make a decision about its fate before its March 21, 2018 Board meeting.

SFDC will use the interim period to promote “METAexpo” with city leaders. "METAexpo" - “Michigan Energy - Transportation - Agriculture - Expo.” is the grass-roots vision for the 160-acre site that the SFDC has been advocating since 2012.

METAexpo is a visual template of elements - reflecting community "asks" - that the SFDC deems to be *essential for a successful 21st century development* at that historic site. Under no circumstances should METAexpo be viewed as a counter-proposal.

Coalition member architects and landscape architects used extensive community input to fashion METAexpo. In 2015, it received a prestigious “Merit Award from the Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). In 2016, Detroit City Planning Director Maurice Cox described the concept as “visionary.”

The SFDC is working diligently to ensure METAexpo reflects the aspirations of residents and businesses in neighborhoods adjacent to the site, on both sides of Woodward Ave. The Coalition has also reached out to the suburbs immediately north of Eight Mile. The non-profit, "D4" - Doing Development Differently in (Metro) Detroit, and the Michigan State University School of Social Work, are assisting in this process.

Public support and the thinking behind METAexpo convinced Magic Plus LLC and Detroit’s Planning Dept. to make changes. The version shown in 2016 includes METAexpo features - walkable streets, for example, and more mixed-use development. But it’s still an auto-dependent, suburban-style strip shopping mall – a concept that’s rapidly becoming obsolete. METAexpo calls for “Transit Oriented Development (TOD)” incorporating a multi-modal transit hub at Eight Mile and the rail line, as part of a regional transit system - in tandem with a new, sustainable infrastructure and energy efficient structures.

These elements are key to thriving neighborhoods in Detroit's Uptown District, and to enhancing Detroit's reinvention as it positions itself to become a global destination.

Detroiters can and should have a significant impact on the fate of the Fairgrounds. The SFDC's aim is to ensure that the MLBA and city leaders carefully consider the role this site will play in the City's economic development over the next 10-25 years, and beyond. Anything less will be shortchanging Detroit, its suburbs, and the State.

The SFDC formed in 2012 to advocate for a grassroots vision for the future of the Michigan State Fairgrounds. We bring together diverse voices in Detroit, the Tri-county region, and the State, in support of "METAexpo" - residents, neighborhood groups, non-profits, entrepreneurs, business associations, civic leaders, union members, urban farmers, ranchers, and more. METAexpo is a forward-looking, 21st century concept for the site of the first and longest running State Fair in the country (closed in 2009). Its 12-member steering committee is supported by an active base of over 300 advocates.

For more information, see www.mifairgroundsfuture.org and "The Future of the Michigan State Fairgrounds," facebook page. To get updates, send an email to sfdcmichigan@gmail.com or call Karen and Frank Hammer, Coalition Co-chairs at (313) 863-3219.