

It takes many villages to raise a church.

Detroit Villages is a new church start initiative of the Detroit Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in the City of Detroit. This house-church model of church planting seeks to create a residential network of neighborhood communities who gather regularly in everyday efforts to live out their radical discipleship of Jesus Christ.

They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

Acts 2:42, The Message

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A. Characteristics of the Detroit Villages House-Church Model for Nurturing Radical Communities of Christian Discipleship In the City of Detroit

1. In the tradition of Christian intentional/missional churches and communities Detroit Villages is a United Methodist-sponsored community of individuals and families living in intentional community with one another and with their neighbors to nurture Christian discipleship in under-served urban areas of the City of Detroit.
2. We are one church rooted in numerous Detroit neighborhoods that have been identified by church and community leadership as fertile ground for growing and rebuilding vibrant, healthy communities. Primary attention is given to neighborhoods with active partnerships for renaissance – through church, civic, and foundation associations, grants, and organizations.
3. Detroit Villages members are transformed by the prevenient grace of God made known particularly in relationships with the poor and the marginalized. Detroit Villages members transform the world by exemplifying a lifestyle of simplicity, vulnerability, and a Wesleyan lifestyle of personal and social holiness.
4. We ascribe to tenets of New Monasticism and “Return Flight” as described by Dr. Bob Lupton including: *Relocation to the abandoned places of empire; Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us; Neighboring as a means of evangelism and nurturing disciples of Jesus, Communal worship and service-work grown from the particular indigenous gifts of the gathered communities, and Integration of our lives and mission work into the already-present fabric of community services in each neighborhood.*
5. Both clergy leadership and laity of Detroit Villages are expected to participate in “tent-making” ministries. While providing salaries/wages on which participants live, these tent-making positions also provide integral connections with the people of the area through which we nurture our expanding network of disciples in the name of Christ.
6. We are a partnership of the Young Leaders Initiative, the New Church Start Committee, and the District and Conference leadership in the Detroit East and West Districts of the United Methodist Church.

B. A Year In the Life of A Detroit Villages Couple

- a) **March 2008** - Charles and Anne, during their senior year in undergraduate school attend a Young Leaders Initiative/emergedetroit.org sponsored “Alternative Spring Break” with other college students and young adults from Detroit. They hear from these young adults about neighborhoods in Detroit into which United Methodist young people have been moving and in which new house churches are being formed.
- b) **May 2008** - After graduation Charles and Anne are married and move into a small home in the Eliza Park neighborhood near the Brightmoor Community in Detroit. They enter into covenantal relationship as new hosts in the Detroit Villages network.
- c) **June/July 2008** - During their first month in Brightmoor Charles and Anne visit their neighbors, invite them to dinner, and start a small bible study with interested folks in their living room on Tuesday nights.
- d) **Fall 2008** - Soon hosts from around the Detroit Villages network call for a communal time of worship together and Charles and Anne invite their neighbors to help build the portable stage for the worship gathering and provide free health screenings for participants after the monthly worship gathering.
- e) **December 2008** - Over Christmas, Charles and Anne gather with other friends who are intrigued by their new life in the city. Two of their friends decide that they will move into the same neighborhood as Charles and Anne and join them as participants in their house-church. Another married couple who are friends realize that in their new condo in the Northend neighborhood that they would like to become hosts of a new house-church that gathers other Wayne State graduate students like them. Charles and Anne welcome these friends into this missional living and work to get them connected and immersed in the covenantal process.
- f) **January 2009** - As they get to know their neighbors they find that many work in the field of home construction and repair. So, during the next summer, Charles organizes volunteers to work with the Motown Mission project helping youth teams from around the country build accessibility ramps for residents in the nearby Cody/Rouge neighborhood.
- g) **February 2009** - Anne, in her medical school work, discovers a passion amongst her neighbors for health and healing ministries. So, during one of her rotation placements with the Joy/Southfield clinic, she organizes a collection drive to provide basic medical supplies for the clinic amongst Brightmoor residents.
- h) **March 2009** - The new house-church started by Anne and Charles' friends get a whole new crew of WSU students to attend the 2009 Alternative Spring Break.

C. Organization

1. HOUSE CHURCHES - We are one church in many Detroit neighborhoods. House churches are the living cells of the Detroit Villages body. Resident hosts (families and individuals) live and minister primarily with those living near them. They gather weekly for bible study, prayer, service, and fellowship. As more hosts join us more local neighborhoods become centers of our ministry.
2. WORSHIP CELEBRATIONS – After an initial house-church planting season, these formed and thriving neighborhood communities meet together monthly for corporate worship grown from our various locales. This worship celebration speaks in the artistic and cultural language of those with whom we live. These are moments to refocus, inspire, and commune together in the love of Jesus Christ and to re-commission members for their ongoing neighborhood ministries.
3. WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF THE CHURCH/CITY - In various ways members of Detroit Villages UMMC integrate their ministries with the already-present ministries and service-work of area United Methodist churches, other church communities, and a multitude of Detroit City organizations. Our neighborhoods become locations in which Motown Mission participants work. We volunteer at Detroit Public Schools. We gather food for Gleaners and Focus:Hope. We organize and participate in ongoing civic conversations about how to help Detroit be the best community it can be. Worship celebrations and other Detroit Villages gatherings happen in "third spaces" (coffeehouses and other public venues) and existing United Methodist church buildings.
4. LEADERSHIP – In order to be good stewards of limited resources we envision that both clergy and lay leadership of Detroit Villages will be expected to have employment outside of the Detroit Villages structure that will serve as their “tent-making” ministry. With this strategy for limited paid staff we expect to ingrain the work of the church into the everyday life of all participants, not just primarily in the professional portfolios of full time “church staff.”

D. Growing the Community – A Timeline

1. *PLANTING HOSTS IN NEIGHBORHOODS – Beginning June 2008*

- a. As a partnership with the staff of the Young Leaders Initiative, we will research and discern which neighborhoods would provide the most fertile soil for new house churches. These placements become a destination for young people looking to live out their Christian faith through “gentrification with justice,” or “missional/intentional communities” - forms of gathering as the Body of Christ that lend themselves to the authenticity of Christian calling that young people crave today.
- b. With a combination of individual monetary investment and grants from the UMC and other organizations homes will be purchased or leased. Detroit Villages hosts and participant could inhabit underused parsonages and other church-owned buildings as a way to care for otherwise vulnerable real estate when left empty. **We would look to plant 2-3 house churches within the first year.**
- c. Each host will enter into covenantal relationship with the other house churches - putting a plan together for how their new local community will live out the tenets and characteristics that we share.
- d. Some house churches will provide intentional "open space" for new persons interested in relocating to the City of Detroit. This living space will enable new participants to practice living in Christian community and relocating to previous areas of "flight."

2. *NURTURING URBAN INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY – January 2009 to Summer 2010*

- a. Within a month of moving in each house church will begin gathering regularly with neighbors for appropriate disciple-building experiences. For some this will be weekly bible studies. For others this will be a tutoring program for neighborhood children. This first regular gathering should be built on the most prevalent assets of the community.
- b. Organizers of this network (including staff from YLI along with hosts in covenantal relationship) will encourage each house church to create one new regular gathering a year for they and their neighbors. Each additional gathering should seek to compliment those already in place. So, house church communities with an established bible study might create a weekly work project or neighborhood garden.
- c. Community meals will be a key element in these house church gatherings, it is the powerful tool that Jesus used and would be good for us to follow!
- d. We would look to **plant 1-2 more house churches, and to encourage each of the existing house churches double in their neighborhood participation during this time.**

3. *ONGOING HOST SUPPORT/DEVELOPMENT – Fall 2009 (or as hosts come into covenant relationship)*

- a. House Church hosts will covenant together to pray for one another, meet twice a month for support and encouragement, and share best practices with on another.
- b. Hosts will be the co-creators of shared resources like indigenous bible studies, online blogs, and etc.
- c. Hosts will participate together in ongoing missional community leader training

through events like "Schools Of Conversion" (a visit and weekend long training, in-house, by a member of the New Monastic community) and Christian community development conferences.

4. *CREATING THE WORSHIP CELEBRATION – January 2010*

- a. Creating the worship celebration will happen after at least six months of developing local house church communities.
- b. representatives from each house church will take part in preparing that part of the service for which they are particularly well-equipped. So, the house that has great bakers will make the communion bread; the house that has great musicians can bring their songs, and the house with great mystics will lead in prayer and meditation.
- c. Hosts and guest United Methodist clergy will share in proclaiming the Word.
- d. A location central to the City of Detroit and open to hosting this type of event will be key. We will not rent space, but will gather in a place that desires to be in relationship with our community by hosting us once a month. This could be a local UMC or other "third place" like a coffeehouse or other venue.
- e. Resources developed and shared during these worship celebrations will be made available under Creative Commons licensing for other Christian communities to use as well.
- f. In response to the corporate worship gatherings we would look to **connect with new host to plant 1-2 more house churches.**

5. *INVITATIONAL MULTIPLICATION – Spring/Summer 2011*

- a. Detroit Villages will succeed when we create a DNA of radical discipleship, intentional community, and inspiring corporate worship that can be replicated in any neighborhood in the city.
- b. While many of our communities will be smaller gatherings (10, 20, or maybe 30 people gathering regularly in a neighborhood) we will strive for ongoing growth in the number of these communities across the city.
- c. We will be actively involved in inviting others to join us on this journey by moving to the city, and/or creating a house church, and/or visiting with us to see what this is all about.
- d. At some point after these house church communities have formed and have begun gathering regularly for corporate worship the appointment of an Elder by the Bishop and cabinet of the DAC will be an appropriate move to further nurture this movement of God's people as one church in many locations in the City of Detroit. **With the addition of a staff Elder we would look to plant 2-3 house churches each year for the life of the Detroit Villages community.**

E. Conclusion and Proposal

1. At this point in the life-stage of United Methodism in Detroit numerous assets have presented themselves that lend themselves to a house-church model for planting new communities of Christians:
 - a) Young people are seeking to live out their faith in radical communities where faith energizes an entire neighborhood around faithful health and wholeness. These young people are also blessed by the ability to relocate according to this call toward radical community.
 - b) The housing situation in Detroit, while posing problems for many, has made a large quantity of homes available and affordable for those interested in investing in Detroit communities. With the development of some particular homes, places for new individuals to practice living in community in the City could be provided. For instance, one home in which a host couple resides could make rooms available for semester-long or year-long visitors to live with them in community and participate in their neighborhood ministries. Under-utilized church-owned homes could provide a natural place for new communities to be planted.
 - c) The Young Leaders Initiative, in it's mission to nurture Christian leadership among young people, can provide staff time to help coordinate this already-occurring movement of young people into the city.
 - d) The New Church Start Committee has established connections and processes for evaluating, resourcing, and submitting to the Bishop for discernment creative ideas for new church communities that seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

2. Therefore, we propose a partnership with the New Church Start Committee according to the following schedule and information:
 - a) With leadership who has participated in the New Church Start Academy, and with the staff support of Young Leaders Initiative staff, we will embark on a process of identifying neighborhoods and possible new residents to plant house churches in fertile communities in the City of Detroit.
 - b) We will begin to identify an appropriate home for renovation as an ongoing mission house for practicing intentional/missional living. YLI/coordinating staff will covenant to live in this new mission house as the host for this node of the new house-church network.
 - c) Ongoing training of hosts and participants will utilize New Church Start Committee training sessions, New Monastic schools for missional communities, and Christian Community Development Association conferences for development of Detroit Villages leadership development.
 - d) A budget similar to the one below will allow for this ongoing, organic, growth of many local communities gathering in this movement of God's spirit through residential ministry in the City of Detroit.

Proposed 5 Year Partnership

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Totals
Administration, Training, Resources for House Communities	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$50,000
House Renovations/ Investments		\$45,000 (renovate one house for hosting new participants)				\$45,000
Total 5 Year Investment						\$95,000

A Special Note

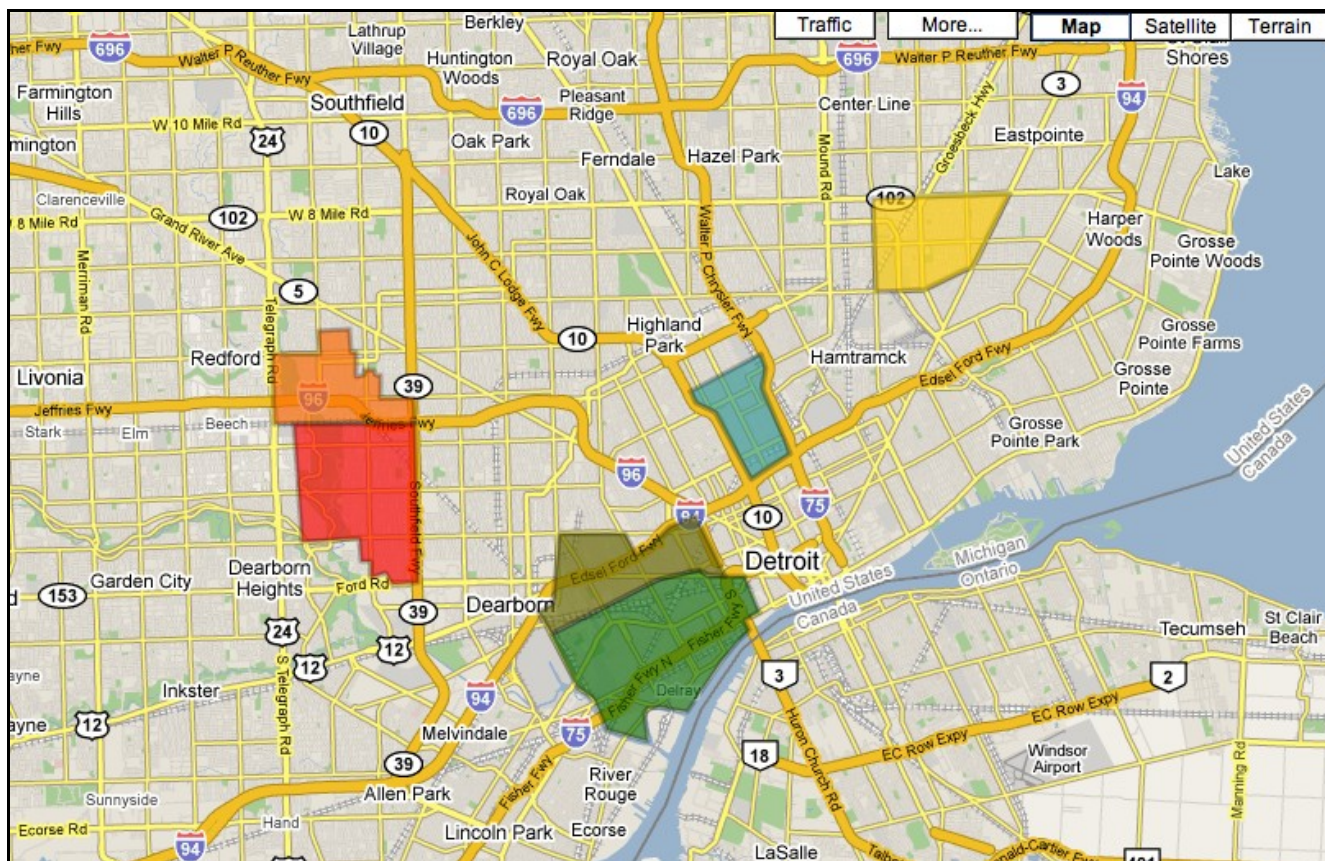
This proposal is only meant to envision how a partnership with New Church Start resources could take shape. The reality of our situation is that young people are already moving to Detroit, the Young Leaders Initiative is already having to react to that reality and nurture these young people through service, bible study, and worship gatherings, and partnerships with local neighborhoods have already begun. As such, we joyfully invite the United Methodist connection to join with us on this exciting re-investment in the City of Detroit by those who call themselves the body of Jesus Christ.



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F. Neighborhood Data

Below is information on Detroit neighborhoods that have been recognized by the Skillman Foundation (<http://www.skillman.org/>) and that have received grants and other partnerships to build healthy communities. Numerous United Methodist churches are in active ministry in these areas and in nearby neighborhoods. Detroit Villages seeks to be an engine for driving new people into lives of discipleship through house-churches and by creating opportunities for service through already present organizations and churches in the local area.



Map of local Detroit neighborhoods with active community organizations, local churches, partnerships with the Skillman Foundation, and which may be ripe for house-church plants.



The Brightmoor Community (<http://goodbrightmoor.org/>)

“We are a neighborhood in the North-West of Detroit and are proud to have been chosen as a "Good Neighborhood" by the Skillman Foundation.” At Outer Drive and Schoolcraft the Brightmoor Community has been a site for Young Leaders interns for two years. The Brightmoor Community Center and West Outer Drive United Methodist Church children and youth programs welcome large

numbers of neighborhood youth for school year and summertime programs. Partnerships with University of Michigan Students and other organization have led to active programs for children and families, including a “One Stop Shop” for distributing needed household item to families in need.



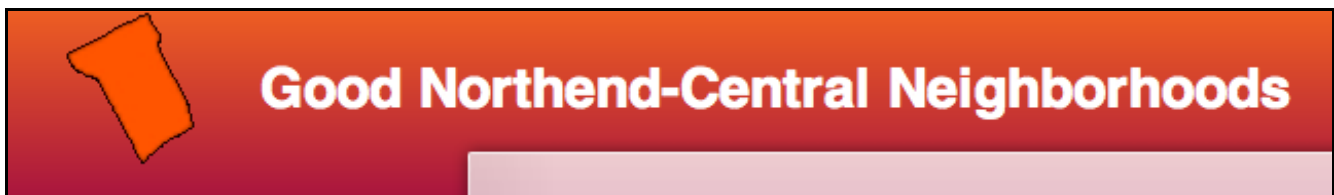
The Chadsey/Condon Neighborhood (<http://www.goodchadseycondon.org/>)

“Chadsey/Condon is a community of 34, 909 residents in Southwest Detroit and is home to an estimated 11,626 children and youth (under 18).” Through public arts programs, neighborhood partnership training, urban gardening, and effective meeting skills program the Chadsey/Condon neighborhood seeks to provide healthy opportunities for growth for it's many young people.



The Cody/Rouge Community (<http://www.goodcodyrouge.org/>)

The Cody/Rouge community goal is that "All children live in a village where they are safe, healthy, educated and have access to unlimited resources." With the B.U.O.Y. (Business United with Officers and Youth) residents of the Cody/Rouge neighborhood seek to match the guidance and wisdom of elders with the energy and promise of young people for the betterment of their community, the city, and the world.



The Northend-Central Neighborhoods (<http://www.goodcentral.org/>)

“We are bridging the gaps between the existing Community and the Newly Developing one.” By connecting people to places of worship, local non-profits, online resource centers, school, business, and community development corporations the Northend-Central neighborhoods seek to claim their historic identity as a vibrant center of residential life along the Woodward corridor in Detroit, MI.



The Osborn Neighborhood (<http://www.goodcentral.org/>)

The Osborn neighborhood seeks to gather people through block clubs, library programs, and arts activities for nurturing the cultural and communal health of residents.



Southwest Detroit and Vernor Area (<http://www.goodvernor.org/>)

With youth and family economic wellbeing, real estate financing, gang awareness, and business training the Vernor area seeks to help each other live healthy and stable lives.