

STATE OF THE CITY 2011

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for coming to Hamtramck's 2011 State of the City address. Witam. Mire se vini. Merhaba. Dobro dosli. Laskavo prosimo. Shagatom. Welcome. Your interest in the city is much appreciated, and your involvement is very much needed. We've always been a city that engages its residents heart and soul--a place that people feel passionate about. It makes our lives here intense and difficult at times. But it may be our best hope as a city--YOU may be our best hope, and your commitment our saving grace. We need people for whom Hamtramck is a place to settle down in, to invest in, and to build. We need people who see Hamtramck as the spot on this earth in which they are rooted and from which they are nurtured, and which they tend and nurture in return. It doesn't have to mean being born here. We are a city that rightly prides itself on welcoming newcomers from around the world. But it should mean contributing to the well-being, beauty, and stability of your property, your street, your business district, your neighborhood, and your city. It is not always easy to live here--but we need people committed to building good lives here, for themselves, their families, and their neighbors. And together, those committed people create a living place, with an identity, a history, and a future. A place with its own soul.

I'd like to acknowledge our city employees who have retired in the past year: There has been substantial turnover in the police department, with the retirements of Ben Bielecki, Rich Betleja, Craig Serafino, Glenn Kay, Wilbur Robinson, Dave Donnell, Mke Szymanski, Walter Tripp, and of course Police Chief Marek Kalinowski. And finally, we mourn the loss of parole officer Joe Brzezinski, who was always a gentleman.

It's been a dramatic year for Hamtramck. If I hadn't already gone gray, I would certainly be gray by now after what we've gone through. It's a tribute to the hard work of many people working in city hall and in our city's neighborhoods that we are still here, and we are still Hamtramck. That is no small feat, considering that in the past year we faced what may have been the most serious threat to our survival in our 89 years as a city.

Even so, the year has had its fair share of good news and accomplishments. Not the least of these is the long-awaited acquisition of a building for our Hamtramck Historical Museum. Hamtramck has one of the most colorful and interesting and significant histories of any city in Michigan. And now that story will be told for visitors and residents alike in our own building, acquired through a grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) and the Michigan Cities of Promise program, with help from the Community Development Block Grant program and the Friends of Historical Hamtramck. Additional grants are funding a new heating, ventilation, and cooling system (HVAC). But the building still needs a lot of work including a fire suppression system, handicap accessibility, and repairs to the exterior. There is a lot of fundraising to do, and I hope you'll consider contributing.

We're also excited by mounting evidence that the grandstand in Veteran's Park was used by the Detroit Stars of baseball's Negro Leagues. This just increases our historical profile, and opens new opportunities for recognition and development. Thanks to the committee working on this project.

Hamtramck has also just been judged the most walkable city in the State of Michigan, which should come as no surprise to the many of us who do our best to walk or bike to our destinations in the city.

Of course many people get their positive impressions of the City of Hamtramck through our festivals, which are growing and becoming even more a part of our identity. You certainly know this if you're in town for Paczki Day. The Paczki Day Committee continues to do an outstanding job, now in partnership with the DDA, to organize Countdown festivities on the Saturday before, and with our bars and bakeries to market Paczki Day as a signature Hamtramck holiday.

2010 saw the inauguration of the first Hamtramck Harvest Festival, organized and promoted in partnership with the DDA and Real Detroit Weekly Magazine. The event was not successful in financial terms its first year, but promises to grow if promoted, and I hope it will continue in 2011.

Metro Times' Hamtramck Blowout attracts thousands of young and not so young music fans to the city, taking advantage of another of our claims to fame--the number of bars and live music entertainment venues in such close proximity. This is a characteristic of our city that it is in all of our interests to support.

Besides the ever-popular St. Florian Strawberry Festival, kicked off by the Firefighter's procession and Mass, the Bangladeshi Festival has now become a regular event. And just yesterday the first ever Arab Festival was held in Veteran's Park by the Yemeni American Chamber of Commerce.

Hamtramck knows how to throw a good party. I've said it before and I'll say it again here--the more festivals and events here, the better. People see us as a destination for ethnic food and entertainment, and they look to us for an authentic, living experience of diversity in action. We would be wise to foster a healthy balance of activities and events that encourage that welcoming and fun-loving image.

Which brings me to our Labor Day Festival. Just last year there were serious doubts whether it could even go forward, given our financial uncertainty and the difficulties of orchestrating an event of this scope. But after a very successful 2010 festival organized by community volunteers, it looks to be on steady feet. I couldn't forgive myself if I didn't publicly acknowledge committee chair Kathleen Bittner and co-chair Rachel Srodek, along with their volunteer committee and the DDA as a supporting partner. We'll be seeing more music and more innovations in 2011, and I know we can all look forward to an event that will make Hamtramck proud.

These are encouraging developments, and they point to the strength of our identity and the capabilities of our people. Still, there were times in the past year when I wondered if I was witnessing the sad end of that proud history. When the City of Detroit began withholding our share of the tax revenues from the GM Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly plant, we struggled to make up the lost revenue, eating up the budget stabilization fund we'd worked so hard to accumulate, while trying to resolve the issue through the legal system and ultimately with outside mediation. You know the story. It was a long and stressful process, and those of us in the thick of negotiating a resolution spent many sleepless nights. This spring we reached a

settlement that in essence restored the funds Hamtramck was owed, \$3.2 million dollars. If Hamtramck had a Medal of Valor, there are three men who have earned it working through this issue, and I'd like to thank them publicly--City Manager Bill Cooper, Finance Director Nevrus Nazarko, and City Attorney Jim Allen. Few realize the massive amounts of documentation, the trips back and forth to Lansing, the skill at defining and arguing our case, and even the careful media strategy, that went into what should have been a simple matter of stating the obvious and appealing for justice. We hope that with this episode behind us, we can continue to work with the City of Detroit going forward on terms of mutual respect and cooperation.

The irony of all this is that we've had nothing but good news and positive publicity for the City out of the Poletown plant itself (or D-Ham, as it's been rebranded). Around this time last year, President Obama visited the plant to celebrate production of the Chevy Volt, and with the addition of the 2012 Malibu and 2013 Impala, the plant is planning to run three shifts for the first time in its 30-year history. When the national media talks about the Volt and advanced electric vehicle manufacturing, when people across the country think of the Volt and the auto industry's tentative turnaround, it is the City of Hamtramck that comes to mind.

If only the news were as good out of American Axle. A recent announcement--which city officials learned about when we read it in the newspaper just as you did--confirmed what many of us had already suspected: the company was abandoning production in the Detroit-Hamtramck facility. I understand they have been busy dismantling

machinery this week. In truth, our section of the complex had been idle for some time. The loss of American Axle appears to be the culmination of a long series of events, deliberate company strategies, and larger economic forces. It was not our doing, but it is our problem.

I know our ability to attract and retain businesses in the city is a concern for everyone. Although we aren't able to prevent American Axle from closing, be assured the city has an active protocol to retain local businesses. Our Community and Economic Development Director, along with representatives of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Business Development team, Wayne County economic development staff, and representatives of Michigan Works and Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, meet regularly with businesses to identify ways to help them stay in Hamtramck. When reports reached us that Kowalski Sausage was considering leaving the city, this group and other stakeholders met several times with company representatives to work out a solution that could fulfill the company's needs right here in Hamtramck. Although none of the options or opportunities we presented were pursued by the company, at this time Kowalski appears to be staying, and we are ready to reconvene those talks whenever they are ready to discuss the future of their company here.

While I'm on the subject, let me talk a little more about our business climate and especially the work of the Downtown Development Authority and the Community and Economic Development department over the last year. While we should be concerned over the vacant storefronts on Jos.

Campau, we should also recognize some of the new businesses that have opened.

- The expansion of Day's Fashions--a 95-year-old business here in Hamtramck--comes quickly to mind. We're all looking forward to seeing its new bridal boutique open at Poland and Jos. Campau in the beautifully-renovated storefront.
- European Market opened on Jos. Campau north of Caniff in another renovated building--I highly recommend the homemade bread, yogurt, burek, and baklava. Its owners, who live right here in Hamtramck, are also working with the city to create an outdoor fruit and vegetable stand.
- Right next door, Maria's Comida's Mex-Asian fusion menu has attracted a lot of media attention, as has the growing distribution of its salsa across the metro area. This is another business owned by Hamtramck residents.
- In the industrial area at our south end, the former Forest Island Recycling building is soon to be demolished and a new state of the art LEED certified, high tech facility built by Hamtramck Recycling, LLC, which is already working with the city and the Recycling Commission to support our programs in Hamtramck. With the help of the CED Department, the company recently received a six million dollar New Market Tax Credit package from the Michigan Magnet Fund. It will also be working with our Hamtramck Economic Development Corporation/ Brownfield Redevelopment Authority on possible brownfield redevelopment incentives.
- Nearby on Denton Street, the Hanley International Academy is building a large new school on the site of the former Department of Human Services building.

- Hamtramck Hoardhouse is now selling an eclectic mix of antiques, vintage clothing, collectible records, and other memorabilia.

Of course our restaurant and food scene remains lively.

- Bengal Masala on Conant closed, but after significant reinvestment opened as Sultan Café
- Gandhi Restaurant has reopened as ZamZam
- Last year the every-popular Alladin's completed its garden and dining room expansion, making a truly classy and comfortable facility
- I see evidence just down the block that the city's first Bengali restaurant, Taj Mahal will reopen. I was at its first grand opening way back in the last century, and I hope I'll be at this one, too
- And don't forget Bonoful Sweets and Cafe--we might just be Michigan's capital for Bangladeshi and Indian cuisine
- The Conant Cafe has also opened with an expanded menu of Middle Eastern food
- The Clock remodeled and reopened after being closed for a couple of years, and is again open 24 hours (and don't forget it was used as a setting for Detroit 1-8-7; I know I won't forget it because I had dinner at Maria's Comida while Michael Imperioli was also eating there)
- And I'm looking forward to the opening of Ootie's sandwich shop and deli on Jos. Campau just south of Evaline. If it's anything like the owner's other venture, Good Girls Go to Paris Crepes, we're in for a real treat that will become a destination for foodies.

On a sad note, two of our most venerable and long-standing businesses closed this year:

- Kopytko's Market, a one-of-a-kind, old fashioned butcher shop with its old-time Ukrainian smokehouse
- and Under the Eagle restaurant, which was replaced after a month of significant investment by Campau Coney. Many of us have personal memories of both places.

Other redevelopment projects are in process or have been completed:

- Angel's Fashions was completely renovated and rebuilt after a fire.
- At Vet Park Lofts, the city is using federal Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NSP2) funds to prepare the remaining completely renovated, modern units for sale at low cost, \$50,000 - \$60,000, as live/work spaces.
- Greater Detroit Hospital, once the worse eyesore on the Detroit side of Carpenter, is moving forward as a charter school, medical office, and senior assisted living facility. This building was recently awarded TURBO designation by the Wayne County Land Bank. The owner expects to invest between \$500k - \$750k on the Hamtramck portion of the project alone.
- Plans for the Hausner Building, including the Flavor Restaurant, offices, and residential lofts, have been stalled for some time, but we are looking for some movement soon through a DDA facade improvement grant. This project is also being facilitated with a Second Story Rehabilitation Program grant, which offers building owners up to \$35,000 per unit to build or renovate residential units in the upper stories of buildings on the commercial strips.
- Now that the front of the Citizen Building has also been repaired with a facade improvement grant, the residential lofts piece of that project

can also move forward, with the help of Second Story Rehabilitation Program funding.

- The Piast Institute will also be rehabbing its upstairs apartment with the help of this program. In total, the city received \$300,000 to help building owners prepare their upper story residential units. Not only does this increase the property value and our tax base, but it means more people living downtown and contributing to our lively atmosphere, with more eyes on the street for safety, and more consumers to support our businesses. All proposed construction should get underway this summer.
- And returning to the city-wide business facade improvement grants, work on projects has been delayed by changes in the funding source that have raised the matching cost for businesses and added layers of bureaucracy to the process. Despite these challenges, other businesses which have completed their renovations or are scheduled to begin work in the immediate future include Dale's Party Store, MGM Pawn Brokers, Painted Lady Saloon, the Yoga Suite, Sunny Sky (formerly Flowers by Us) and Record Graveyard.

Another of the tools in the city's toolbox as it looks for ways to enhance business development is the **\$1,000,000 grant** it received from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The city can use the money as seed funding for its own grant/loan program to help fill financing gaps in local redevelopment projects. The USEPA is severely behind in approving the set up of this grant, but we hope to begin utilizing this funding source this summer.

We also all share with you an understandable concern about the quality and types of businesses allowed in Hamtramck, and particularly in our central business district. I'm sure you can all think of your own examples. We are working to make sure that the city presents an image of which we can be proud, attracting desirable businesses that contribute to a lively and diverse atmosphere--family friendly without being stuffy. Protecting that image is vitally important, because just as on a residential block, one bad neighbor can destabilize an entire area. We see good people leaving the city who would have liked to stay. The landlords and business owners who facilitate this decay of our social and economic fabric are nothing less than public menaces.

That said, the city has been working hard to promote and support local businesses. One way is through sidewalk sales. The next weekend of sales coming up August 4-6, so get ready to support your local shops. The DDA also organizes quarterly Merchant's Meetings at local restaurants throughout the city, where business and property owners can network, raise questions and concerns, and hear speakers. August is targeted for a Vacant Property Open House, in which potential business owners, entrepreneurs and brokers can visit some of the DDA district's most marketable vacant properties, tied in with a Model D speaker series. The DDA's membership in the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau has brought tour groups and a great deal of good press, including a promotional video included in the Detroit Metropolitan Airport Wayne County Visitors Kiosk. No-cost property listings through Wayne County's marketing programs, along with a city business directory, also help promote our city. And there are many other strategies and programs underway.

The CED Department and DDA are working on an independent economic development themed website and a newsletter, which will focus on attracting people, business and tourism to the City. This site will be much more elaborate, and completely separate from the City's current page. (And as for the city's website, a new version is in progress. Don't get me started.)

Equally important, the CED Department is also working to increase the efficiency of the development process. The Department has contracted with Carlise Wortman & Associates to update all of the City's planning, community, and economic development related applications and permits, to create the coordinated, streamlined process that developers look for.

As we promote Hamtramck, we also need to make sure we have a safe and attractive city to show off. The condition of our trees and planter boxes on Jos. Campau have been sore points for years now. This was compounded by damage to the sprinkler system while DTE was replacing gas lines. We are seeking restitution from DTE. In the meantime, plans are underway to plant durable perennial ground cover that will survive and expand even without working sprinklers. Several businesses have also adopted the planter boxes in front of their stores, which is something we encourage. In addition, the process of removing dead, dying, and dangerous trees has begun, with a grant in place to replace 22 of the removed trees and plant 8 new trees at the entrance of Veteran's Park.

Last year, the DDA installed surveillance cameras to cover nearly the entire Central Business District as well as the Shoppers World city parking lot. And this summer, the DDA along with the Community and Economic Development Department is installing garbage cans along Jos. Campau between Caniff and Carpenter and south of Holbrook, as well as on Conant. May I suggest that, in conjunction, our police start taking the crime of littering seriously. We are also looking into ways to reinstitute street and sidewalk cleaning along Jos. Campau. May I also respectfully suggest that business owners take responsibility for sweeping the sidewalks and curbs surrounding their own businesses, not to mention cleaning their windows. I know many of our business owners do this and much more. I think we also all know the ones who don't. I for one don't patronize them.

Code enforcement continues to be a sore issue in the neighborhoods and in the business districts. The DDA is funding a dedicated code enforcement position for the downtown district, with authority to write parking tickets as well. The officer has now been on the beat for several weeks, and we all look forward to a general improvement in the appearance of Jos. Campau. Give him a thumbs up if you see him.

Let me turn from the cleanliness and security of our business district to that of our neighborhoods. In the last year, all police vehicles were equipped with Mobile Data Computers and printers, which give officers the ability get information, write reports, and print tickets on the road. New 800 mhz radios were brought on board, making us compliant with NSA standards and allowing us too communicate with just about anyone in the state. We were one of the last cities in the tri-county area to get this done. 911 funds,

narcotics forfeiture funds, and grants made these major improvements possible. There is a continuing issue with public access that I hope will be resolved, because the public's ability to monitor crime in their area is vital to protecting themselves and aiding law enforcement efforts. We are also on the verge, I'm assured, of joining the online crime mapping network which will allow you to get daily lists of crimes in you area via email. I use this service myself for the surrounding Detroit area, and soon our information will be available on the system as well. Three new officers have been trained as evidence techs, and all officers are now FEMA certified which allows us to go after more grants. In our case we have submitted over 2 million dollars worth with the help of our local Weed and Seed. In cooperation with Weed and Seed every part of the city has been organized into a local block club. If you are not an active member of your own block club, you should be. There are many ways to help your neighborhood, but few as simple and effective as the block club. Hamtramck was featured by the National Weed and Seed Convention as a model of how a local program should be run, and included a bus tour attended by people from all over the country. Also through Weed and Seed, the City Radio Patrol has been launched, in which residents patrol targeted areas as the eyes of the Police Department. While the police have their job to do, it is also our responsibility as residents to look out for our neighborhoods and our neighbors.

And there is always a lot of work to do in our neighborhoods, especially in these hard times with increased foreclosures and less disposable income for maintenance and repair. As the member of a consortium including MSHDA, The Michigan Land Bank, and 12 other Michigan cities, last year

the City of Hamtramck was **awarded \$15,439,679.00** through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to acquire, deconstruct, and demolish blighted structures, acquire and rehabilitate affordable housing, and develop and manage affordable new housing.

The city expects to complete approximately fifty (50) units of rehabilitated and new infill single family homes in areas clustered throughout the city. Thirty-nine (39) of these units will be used to meet the final requirements of the R.31 lawsuit.

Another piece of that puzzle is the thirty-five (35) homes being rehabilitated and built using MSHDA Housing Vouchers and other funding sources. All these units should be completed and occupied this summer. This approximately \$9,000,000.00 project is funded completely by MSHDA and the Hamtramck R.31 Housing Development Fund.

Finally, with **\$1.4 million** in Wayne County NSP funding leveraged against approximately **\$1.48 Million in HOME funding**, approximately 30 homes are being acquired, rehabbed, and sold on scattered sites throughout the City. Four (4) homes owned by the City of Hamtramck have been sold to the developer to be rehabbed and sold, and the developer is currently identifying an additional twenty-six homes for rehab.

Last year I was able to tell you that we finally have the components in place to meet all our obligations in what has turned out to be the nation's longest housing discrimination lawsuit. Taken together, the 30 NSP1/Home Fund units and the 35 MSHDA rental units account for 65 units under contract.

Add to that the 39 NSP2 funded homes to be rehabbed or built, and the final 104 units required to fulfill the city's requirements under Sarah Garrett vs. the City of Hamtramck are fully accounted for. This has been a labyrinthine case, and it is no small credit to the efforts of the city and city attorney that we are now able to see the end before us. When the final key is handed to the final resident, we will be breaking out the champagne. Not just will this two-generations long lawsuit, and all its financial burdens, be behind us, but we will know that, in doing the right thing, a larger burden is lifted.

In the war against blight in our neighborhoods, you may have noticed the deconstruction project going on on Carpenter. Rather than demolishing a house and hauling everything to the landfill, the city is working with Warm Training, Henry Ford Community College, and others to take the home apart piece by piece, salvaging the material to be sold and reused in other construction projects. The cedar sheathing of the Carpenter Street house, for example, which will be cleaned, planed, milled, and reused to build 28 sets of kitchen cabinets for a loft redevelopment project in Detroit.

In an older city like ours, with an industrial past, projects are sometimes hampered by environmental issues. The City has utilized its **\$400,000 USEPA Brownfield Assessment Grant** to spur redevelopment by doing environmental assessments at sites connected to, among other projects, the R-31 settlement, Corinthian Baptist Church redevelopment and expansion projects, the Hausner building redevelopment, Veterans Park redevelopment, the Hamtramck Historical Museum, a proposed Hamtramck Public Library expansion, Historic District Designation for Jos. Campau, the

Phoenix Apartments on Caniff, Hamtramck Recycling LLC, and the redevelopment of vacant parcels at Jos. Campau and Neibel.

Infrastructure maintenance and repair is also a challenge to older communities. Despite DTE's work to upgrade our street light system we've had recurring, persistent problems with the lights on Conant, Holbrook, Florian, and Brombach. Please continue to call DTE and notify the city when the lights are out. DTE Gas has also replaced the gas line on Jos. Campau from Caniff to Holbrook over the past two years, which is a good thing but damaged our sidewalks and sprinkler systems. A \$468,000 grant for energy upgrades should help keep heating and cooling costs down in city buildings. As for the inadequacies of our combined sewer system, I probably don't have to tell any homeowner. And unfortunately our modest and much needed road improvement plan has been postponed for lack of funding.

Lack of funding is a diplomatic way of putting it, I guess. Last year brought the city to the brink of insolvency. But only to the brink. Aside from the financial strain of the Poletown dispute, the Independent Auditors report for the third year in a row gave the city an otherwise clean bill of health with no major recommendations for change in our accounting operations and record keeping. Even facing financial meltdown, we continued to pay down our outstanding debt obligations and lower our debt ratio, putting the city on a better footing moving forward. Furthermore, the property tax rate for the fourth year in row remained at a lower level that it has been for the last 15 years. City Council increased taxes by 2.2 mills for fiscal year 2012, but due to declining property values, and therefore declining property taxes, tax

payers will most likely not see any increase in their tax bills. For 2012 we will have a tax levy of 49 mills, very much in line with other cities and much lower than our immediate surrounding communities of Detroit, Highland Park, and Harper Woods. The intergovernmental agreement we entered into one year ago to manage the income tax operations for the City of Highland Park has been very successful. It is the kind of cooperation that our new governor is calling for.

As everyone may know, the amount of state statutory revenue sharing has been decreased--these are proceeds from taxes that the state shares with local governments in exchange for the right we gave up to raise our own funds through mechanisms like a local sales tax. Not only has the amount been decreased, but there are new requirements for accessing the allotment that is left. We are also trying to make the adjustments and meet the reporting requirements called for in the governor's guidelines, in order to receive our full share of the revenue sharing pool from the state. These go hand in hand with numerous adjustments we've been making to stabilize our finances going forward. For instance, changes to our health insurance saved a little over \$400,000 per year. And City Council slashed nearly \$1 million from the fiscal year 2011 budget. A 2012 balanced budget is in place but is dependent on union concessions to meet the budgeted numbers. Despite all these efforts, the 2013 budget currently shows a \$1.5 million dollar deficit. While we worked through a summary financial audit from the State and put off the possibility of an Emergency Manager, we have just a year to find solutions to our financial situation. Next year's State of the City will likely not be pretty.

In the six times I've come before you in this way, it seems we've always had one crisis or another at our heels--we've always been just one step ahead of disaster, and have been so busy looking over our shoulder at the threat moving to overtake us, that we've had precious little time to focus on the road ahead. In reality, this has been the case for much longer than the last six years--it's been the story of Hamtramck's existence, even in the halcyon days that exist only in our selective memories. And that has to change. We need to be working together on the strategies and organizational models that fulfill two main goals: to build the kind of inclusive, vibrant, and exciting urban community that is attractive to young people, supportive of families, and protective of the elderly and disadvantaged. And to build the kind of administrative, economic, and physical infrastructure that makes life here comfortable, livable, and sustainable. Neither is easy. And neither is free.

One guidebook for that change is Hamtramck's new Master Plan, paid for with a \$90,000 grant from the State of Michigan. It includes an economic development strategy, land use plan, recommended updates to the City's zoning ordinance, arts and culture plan, and recreation plan, and is moving through the procedural channels as the city prepares to adopt and apply it. It is something that every Hamtramck resident--and certainly anyone aspiring to leadership here--needs to become familiar with and comment on. We all belong to multiple communities and interest groups--demarcated by family, religious affiliation, ethnicity, birthplace, alma mater, hobbies, profession, and on and on. That's normal and positive and to be commended. It means we are well-rounded and full human beings. But we also should have a common interest and a shared community that

transcends individual affiliations and encompasses the entire city as it has been, is now, and as we want it to be. That is the Master Plan. It includes the vision for how we want our city to look, how we want it to work, and how we want it to run.

In past years I've urged you to build your city from the ground up--through simple acts like learning to say hello to your neighbors in their own language, visiting one new local business a week, sitting on your porch and working with your block club. And I've been energized by the groundswell of do it yourself efforts like the Diversity(Soup) City project, community gardens, the dog park project and others. These are all fundamental ways we build a local culture and create community assets.

At the same time, the cycle of drama that we regularly face drains our people of good will of their spirit and motivation, and keeps us just one step ahead of the bullet. I believe our time for dodging that bullet is running out. We will need to finally take seriously real changes to the organization and conditions of employment in our city departments, especially to public safety, so that those departments are organized and staffed more efficiently to make best use of the talent, skill, and dedication that resides there. We will need to think deeply and creatively about new ways to share some services, processes, and capacity with other units of government or service providers, including the school district and housing commission. At the same time we create these logical and cost-saving efficiencies, we need to embark on some very costly projects to upgrade our inadequate infrastructure. Without adequate sewers; without good quality and well-planned streets, alleys, and sidewalks; without adequate greenspace and

tree cover, we lose the very services and quality of life that businesses and residents need in order to invest their resources and their futures here. How we go about this will be through difficult decisions and shared sacrifice--not words anyone wants to hear, and there is never a good time to hear them. I say them now because I believe we have a city with the will to survive, and a population that understands that the most satisfying possessions are the ones you scrimp and save to earn.

So we have a project for the next year, and we're all partner to it. It isn't just about getting us through this budget cycle, or resolving the latest lawsuit, or surviving the next election. It's about how we build a city that's livable, attractive, and sustainable for the long haul. And it's our most interesting and challenging job to plan it and build it. With our own brains and our own hands. Because despite everything that's been thrown at us, we are still here. We're still live and kickin'. And we are still Hamtramck. Thank you all.