

# DETROIT ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA QUESTIONNAIRE

## JEAN VORTKAMP - MAYORAL CANDIDATE RESPONSE

**Q: DO YOU ENDORSE THE DETROIT ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA?**     **A:** Yes

**Q: DETROIT SUFFERS FROM VERY HIGH RATES OF ASTHMA, CANCER, AND LEAD POISONING, ALL INFLUENCED BY OUR HEAVILY POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT. THESE PROBLEMS IMPACT CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO LEARN AND ADULTS' ABILITY TO WORK. WHAT WOULD YOU, AS MAYOR, DO TO IMPROVE DETROIT'S ENVIRONMENT?**

**A:** First I want to let you know of the environmental commitment I have already made to Detroit. I am a product of the education of Gerald Hairston, an environmental advocate without compare. Gerald would always say that everything was about the environment. With his help, I established a children's garden in my neighborhood, which won an EPA award. Our group hosted the Rooted in Community Conference, pulling in many environmental groups around the city, teaching youth from around the U.S. about Detroit's urban agriculture and food security. When the new recreation center was being built in the neighborhood I sunk my teeth into the process despite the corruption of the city at the time, and even got a meeting for the design build firm for the city with Ford to discuss how they got their Rouge building to become LEED certified so the new rec center could be. The city said they did not have the money and slowly built a cheap husk of what they had committed the community. At the nonprofit I run, I am a fierce advocate of healthy eating and was trained in soil testing. The non profit I run was also a forlorn sub-recipient (sometimes, when it appeared) of NOF funding so I understand the huge issues with it.

**Q: HOW WOULD YOU, AS MAYOR, BE AN ADVOCATE FOR RESIDENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE?**

**A:** I will give voice to every neighborhood. All districts will be divided into clusters of neighborhoods with city department workers, including police assigned to them and known by name. The workers will be at community meetings each month to resolve issues. Clusters will have shared resources like bike shares, lawn mowers and bouncy houses for block club parties. Help will be offered for organizing more block clubs, block club parties: children's activities available, swimmobile, and help in blocking off the street safely, making block club signs and window stickers to show they are a group, as well as how to handle the funds they collect. Across the city there would be organized cook-offs and talent shows through these groups. These activities do not cost a lot of money, can use shared equipment and are essential to bringing Detroit back and capitalizing on the strong sense of neighborhood Detroiters have. The city would have a web page for each cluster that would serve as a contact directory of the department representatives and other important resources in the neighborhood (crime alerts, businesses, news, cultural institutions, etc.). Clusters will get together to make THEIR OWN plans for their areas then work with urban planners to figure out how to put it into action. Plans will be made swiftly from community input from a few, well organized meetings that are at community centers, online, at senior and youth centers, from neighborhood businesses and from door-to-door samples. Plans will then be carried out efficiently, quickly and honestly. They will NOT be made by outsiders and they will NOT just end up on a shelf. Through the neighborhood clusters, we can work on environmental justice issues and look at ways every home can be a site of environmental conservation. I would look forward to working with the urban agriculture, environmental advocacy, and health advocacy groups in the city. They could certainly use the cluster meetings to work at organizing and working at solutions with the city for our environmental concerns – indeed Keep Growing Detroit already works through clusters. I would love to take maps that show where certain kinds of diseases are in certain neighborhoods and share them with residents, along with possible causes and solutions. Transparency, there could be a cluster food co-ops or clusters could address concerns about a business that is polluting. The cluster groups would be a vehicle for environmental change throughout the city in every neighborhood. Everyone will be asked to volunteer 1 hour each month for Detroit which means 700,000 hours a month. If even half that number volunteered to invest in ourselves, Detroit would be a different city. We will focus on financing ourselves through an insurance co-op, food co-ops and credit unions in every neighborhood, entrepreneurship focusing on women, investing in rehabbing homes in our own neighborhoods and a community land trust which provides permanently affordable home ownership for low income people while preventing gentrification. At libraries and community centers, there will be one-on-one help for entrepreneurs. I will encourage innovation, Detroit-owned small scale manufacturing that pays a living wage and crowd financing of new ideas. The Manoogian Mansion will become, among other public uses, a business welcome center. Each neighborhood would have a liaison for new and established businesses. As my team would work from the inside to improve our interaction with business, the liaison would work with businesses and startups in the neighborhood to get the immediate help they need from the city without them interacting directly with downtown. We will get input from the liaisons on how to improve the processes, do research and look at other cities with successful systems and construct a healthy government-business relationship. Unmowed grass,

MAYORAL	DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT 5	DISTRICT 6	DISTRICT 7	AT LARGE
---------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	----------

# DETROIT ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA QUESTIONNAIRE

## JEAN VORTKAMP - MAYORAL CANDIDATE RESPONSE

**A:** property not kept up, and illegal dumping will be aggressively pursued through the Department of Administrative Hearings. There will be a 311 phone line and app to report them, enter them onto a map, see if others have reported it, and progress being made. In addition to the 4 times/ year or more if we can afford it, bulk pick-up would be on demand for community groups and seniors. We will work to end evictions and foreclosures and get homeowners into the other vacant homes. We will sue the banks for their predatory lending and their part in the destruction of our neighborhoods. They will be held responsible for the property they own. We also need to uplift ALL Detroiters through art and include the many creative people in Detroit who have never had a chance to explore their talents fully in the “creative class.” Through neighborhood talent/art shows, lessons/training and competitions, and adult education art classes there will be an outlet and structure for Detroiters to showcase their talents and find ways to make a living off these talents with consulting to help negotiate the business side. Recreation builds up communities and neighborhoods. Having basically run a recreation center off my front porch for the past 15 years, I know of a million ways to bring recreation to neighborhoods with very little money. For clusters of neighborhood groups there will be: toy libraries, bike shares, senior walking clubs and block club parties. I would like to get a corporate donor to give us swimmobiles again. Neighborhood events for children are the best way to build community and to show children they are cared for by the community. I will work toward having transportation to the recreation centers for areas that no longer have them. I will work toward putting play leaders back in neighborhood parks to help them become community anchors again. Recreational and sports opportunities will be linked to reading programs. My focus would be on providing opportunities everywhere so children, adults and seniors in all parts of the city can access quality programming. Also, my administration will set a good record in writing and following through on grants, which usually brings more money. (And so much more!!) I will help Detroiters heal the spirit of Detroit by having events in the faith-based community and at community centers in Detroit and the surrounding suburbs focused on healing Detroit. It is time to grieve our losses and to hope together for our future.

**Q: IN THE INTERESTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, HOW WOULD YOU WORK TO ALLEVIATE DISPROPORTIONATE ENVIRONMENTAL BURDENS IN THE CITY?**

**A:** There are certain neighborhoods like southwest Detroit or the area near the incinerator that have a heavy burden. I would pay special attention to alleviating their unfair burden and be sure it did not increase. For instance, if we were to enforce the diesel truck idling ordinance, why couldn't the trucks for the bridge park and take a number like at the deli? I think that is environmentally friendly and more humane to the drivers.

**Q: THE CITY NEEDS TO BE AN ADVOCATE FOR HIGHER ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS. IF YOU ARE ELECTED MAYOR, WOULD YOU ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE WITH THE POWER TO MOVE DETROIT ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA RECOMMENDATIONS FORWARD? IF NOT, WHAT ALTERNATIVES WOULD YOU PROPOSE?**

**A:** I am careful when it comes to environmental issues because very often they are given lip service, fancy titles, offices, and committees and really nothing goes on. That is not my style of leadership and not reflective of my commitment to Detroit's environment. I am not one to sit down to rewrite environmental vision statements or make an office when Detroit is not even following basic ordinances that are on the books. First and foremost, I would be sure Detroit gets up to speed on the rules and regulations it already has. Second is that I would budget for environmental inspectors to follow through on investigating blight concerns through the Department of Administrative hearings. Third I will institute environmental justice in every way I can through the neighborhood clusters and building strong open partnerships with environmental groups. There should be people in every department who are responsible for sustainability and to move the recommendations forward in every department. There are plenty of universities with sustainability offices that we can take the meat of their work (sustainability rules for purchasing or rules for buildings and engineering for example) and just use it for the city. All the people who are working on sustainability across the city would meet as many times a year as we collectively decide would be useful and necessary. I think it needs to be a regular part of our day and our thinking, not a separate office. I would like to make simple checklists for every department to become more sustainable. I would also like to work with groups on improving the water quality of the Detroit River and Rouge River. In the water department I would like to see ways that we could save energy, how it could produce its own energy. There is a lot of waste and corruption at the water department. I would work to turn it on its head to lower water rates, increase efficiency and win some environmental awards. My door would always be open to environmental concerns, issues, and solutions. Being mayor would allow me to continue the commitment I have already made to Detroit's environment but on a much larger scale by giving voice to longtime ignored environmental activists and their concerns.

MAYORAL	DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT 5	DISTRICT 6	DISTRICT 7	AT LARGE
---------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	----------