Last year, Detroit was one of hundreds of cities that submitted ‘bids’ for the second Amazon headquarters. Detroit People’s Platform and many of our partners have signed on to the national campaign around Jobs, Tax Incentives, Accountability and Transparency for Amazon’s new headquarters, wherever they end up.

The bid, authored by Dan Gilbert, city officials and others, was kept confidential until the Detroit Free Press uncovered a copy in December.

DEAR AMAZON

The CBO Reports produced by Planning and Development for each project do not accurately reflect a negotiated agreement between the NAC and the developer, and therefore are not genuine community benefit agreements.

Under the current ordinance developers are receiving a windfall, and community is receiving nothing. Detroit’s current CBO is in need of amendment to facilitate truly negotiated agreements between residents and developers.

Amendment Recommendations:

Legally Binding Community Benefits Report: The result of the CBO process must be a legally binding contractual agreement between the NAC and the Developer.

Require Authentic Negotiations between Developer & NAC: The developer should be required to receive NAC approval before the CBO Report is presented to Council. This would incentivize the developer to negotiate and compromise with the NAC regarding the community concerns they present. This requirement would also provide a method for the NAC to secure genuine community benefits in exchange for the developer’s receipt of public funds.

Penalty for Non-compliance: Developers who do not participate in the CBO process in good faith should be restricted from receiving public funds and benefits from their projects, or subject to suspension or revocation of public funds and benefits.

DEAR AMAZON
What does the Rental Registration Ordinance mean for Detroit renters?
- The Rental Registration Ordinance potentially creates conflict between tenants and landlords while protecting neither.
- The ordinance mandates renters continue to pay rent into an escrow account without providing clarity around the liability of living in non-compliant buildings.
- All landlords need to be held accountable, but the Rental Registration Ordinance has the potential to target good landlords that have provided housing to low income Detroiters for decades.
- Decrease in places for low-income Detroiters to live.
- Disproportionately impacts small independent landlords and further diminishes black home and property ownership.

Major issues that threaten housing stability for Detroiters:
- Limited affordable and desirable housing, escalating rent.
- Utility shutoffs, including water.
- Lack of home maintenance and other support programs for small landlords.
- Transit-dependent riders in Detroit, who are mostly black had to endure long waits, often with no-show buses, lack of seating at bus stops, and sometimes being stranded.

As newcomers are moving into Detroit, their right to "reliable, convenient, and comfortable transportation" as stated in the City Charter of Detroit suddenly becomes a mandate. Public transportation in Detroit has shifted from a service that barely met the needs of bus riders in Detroit to now fitting the needs of choice-riders, many that have private vehicles but opt to use public transit.

How Public Transit is shifting to the benefit of choice riders:
- Transit-dependent riders in Detroit still have to take more time out of their day riding the bus to ensure they are on time for work, school, and medical appointments. Riders often have to leave 1-2 hours early, to make up for the fact that commutes within the city take over ½ to 1 hour to reach their destination. Whereas new bus lines like SMART FAST and REFLEX feature faster and frequent buses that have limited stops.

Recent developments such as the Qline and now the Amazon HQ2 proposal have suddenly heightened the need for reliable public transportation.

The belated reaction and urgency from decision-makers to provide reliable bus service is an insult to majority-black bus riders and speaks to the long standing racist policies that have led to the decline of the Detroit Public Transit System.

Where was the urgency in 2012 and years after, when the city severely cut funding to the Detroit Department of Transportation? Bus riders in Detroit, who are mostly black had to endure long waits, often with no-show buses, lack of seating at bus stops, and sometimes being stranded.

This new urgency to provide decent public transportation is the result of policy shift and public resources being redirected for the benefit of developers and wealthy individuals that use our public funding for their own private gain.

The Qline is a prime example with the redirection of our public tax dollars, over $70 million, used to create a streetcar that only serves Downtown Detroit, which is increasingly white and wealthy. This new urgency reveals that transit-dependent riders, individuals that use the bus as their sole means of transportation, majority-black and low-income bus riders, were never and are not now a priority.
In October of last year, The Brookings Institute released a report on research by David M. Rubenstein Fellow, Andre M. Perry. The research focuses in on 1200 majority-black cities in the US and looks at the connection between the treatment of black and brown individuals and the policies that impact majority-black cities. The report asserts that “if black lives matter, then black cities must matter too.”

Majority-black Detroit, like most majority-black cities and towns in the US, has been shaped by racist policies and economic practices. Since the creation of the Detroit People’s Platform in 2013 Detroit has been subject to a number of policies that have set the stage for revitalization and “rebirth” in one hand, while displacing black people and diverting black political and economic power with the other.

“Benevolent gentrification as a means to improve neighborhoods whether called revitalization, renaissance and revival, only shift neighborhood neglect to other places”

Detroiter have been subject to Consent Agreement, Emergency Management, Bankruptcy, Illegal Foreclosures, Water Shutoffs and other racist policies that were enacted to “save” or “turn around” the city. Many of these policies have resulted in the removal and replacement of certain segments of Detroit’s black population.

We don’t know Detroit’s chances for being chosen as the location for Amazon’s HQ2, but we’ve seen how much of our resources those in power are willing to give away to attract this or other projects. We also know that, no matter where Amazon lands, community must organize to leverage benefits and, if they end up in Detroit, to protect, maintain and empower majority-black Detroit.

Detroit Diverted

Diversions of public funds into private projects has become an organized and managed process in Detroit that is now being replicated throughout the city.

- Federal Hardest Hit funds diverted from keeping Detroiters in homes to home demolition.
- Public Transit funds diverted to the Qline, see Transit Gentrification.
- Public education funds diverted through tax capture to fund private projects.
- City owned, public land and resources diverted to private projects/ownership.

One Fair Wage

One Fair Wage of Michigan is proposing gradually increasing the minimum wage to $12 by 2022, and for workers who receive tips, the minimum wage would get to $12 per hour by 2024. One Fair Wage has 180 days to gather valid signatures of Michigan voters statewide to qualify for the November 2018 ballot. www.onefairwage.com

Earned Paid Sick Leave

Earned Paid Sick Leave will ensure that all Michigan workers have the ability to earn paid sick days to use when they are ill or need to take care of a family member. Time to Care Coalition will collect signatures statewide in an effort to bring the question to the voters in Nov. 2018. www.milimetocare.org

UPCOMING STATEWIDE BALLOT PROPOSALS

Redistricting

With a simple majority vote the voters of Michigan can create an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission in charge of redistricting, ensuring that voters will choose their politicians, not the other way around.

www.votersnotpoliticians.com

READ MORE: www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/10/04/recognition-majority-black-cities-when-there-existence-is-being-questioned/
SAVE THE DATES and 
MAKE A PLAN TO 
VOTE 2018

PRIMARY ELECTION 
Tuesday Aug. 7th

GENERAL ELECTION 
Tuesday Nov. 6th