

**A New Year, A New
Detroit?
Leadership Is The Key**



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Happy New Year Detroit! As we say farewell to one of the most tumultuous years in the history of this city, can a new year bring a new Detroit?

We survived many battles in 2008. We watched a mayoral scandal unfold; leaving in its wake a Mayor and former Chief of Staff convicted of felonies and sentenced to jail time. We watched a financial crisis on Wall Street, which impacted the national economy on every level. We watched a projected City budget deficit go from \$100 million to \$300 million in a matter of weeks. We watched our unemployment rates continue to climb to nearly 20 percent—more than double the national average. We watched record foreclosure rates continue to rise in a city already burdened with too many abandoned homes. We watched as the auto industry,

the cornerstone of our local economy, teetered on the brink of collapse.

The headlines of 2008 may be history, but we'll be impacted by the affects for years to come. It is not possible to address the overwhelming issues that plague this city in one year—maybe not even ten years. Real, lasting change is never expedient. But without leadership the change we need will never come.

Detroit 2009 presents a unique opportunity for us. We will have the opportunity to elect a Mayor not once, but twice. We will also have the opportunity to elect new City Council members. We must elect or reelect effective leaders who possess innate qualities needed to move this city forward.

Any effective leader must have vision, competence, courage, integrity and the ability to communicate/inspire others.

Vision is a clear picture of the great things possible for this city. A leader with vision has a firm grasp on what a thriving Detroit looks like and how to get there. He or she will be able to communicate that vision and act upon it. According to Jack Welch, author and former CEO of General Electric, "Good...leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision and relentlessly drive it to completion."

Competence should be a minimum requirement for anyone in a leadership role, including elected officials. However, history has proven that it is not always the case. The pervasive dysfunction within city government, the debilitating economy, and the high crime rate demand competence.

Our problems require leaders who possess analytical and problem solving skills. We need leaders who make decisions base on sound principles and information, not emotion and personal gain.

Courage will be required to make the crucial decisions that lie ahead. Detroit is a city built to accommodate two million people. Today with less than one million residents the structural and service delivery systems have changed very little.

Moving this city forward will depend upon tough decisions—many of which will be unpopular to key constituencies that have long wielded influence in City Hall. The courage to communicate openly and honestly with taxpayers about the financial crisis and necessary changes is crucial.

Only revolutionary change and innovation will turn Detroit around. It will mandate sacrifice on many levels. Assistance and input from multiple sources in and outside of the city will be

imperative. Therefore, the ability to inspire people to act will be a must.

The next leader(s) must be able to mobilize people to accept the challenges we face and confront those challenges with new approaches, new priorities and new expectations for city government. People have to be inspired to do the things only they can do. We have to believe the change “lives” within us then act accordingly.

Most of all, true leadership inspires people by walking the walk. A strong and consistent demonstration of competence, courage and integrity will inspire others to support the vision.

After the past six years and with rumors of federal indictments still swirling, integrity sets the foundation for all other leadership qualities. Integrity is the demonstration of inner values through outward actions. Honesty, sincerity and a sense of core values are more important than ever.

Success will require the trust of residents, business leaders, potential investors and other elected officials. This can be achieved through honest dealings, reasonable reactions and well-moderated emotions.

A leader with integrity doesn't waiver from their inner values, even when it is expedient to do so.

Moreover, a leader with integrity chooses public service out of a sense of duty to others, not a sense of duty to themselves.

Now is the time to begin rebuilding a new and improved Detroit. Leadership is the key. We must use this opportunity to elect people with strong leadership qualities who are dedicated to the betterment of this city, instead of the betterment of themselves. Then and only then will we begin to see a new Detroit.

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