

CITY OF DETROIT

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

FY2026-2027 BUDGET REPORT



Complaints Analysis & Budget Request

Issued: March 30, 2026

"Together we're turning challenges into opportunities to improve the quality of life for Detroiters!"

Sherry Gay-Dagnogo, M.Ed.

City of Detroit Ombudsman
In Office Since: October 6, 2025

3,462

Total Complaints

844

Web Submissions

85%

Closure Rate

2,357

Legacy Reconciled



From the Pen of City of Detroit Madam Ombudsman
SHERRY GAY-DAGNOGO, M.ED.



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Detroit City Council
City of Detroit
1340 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Ombudsman Budget Analysis for FY 2026-2027

Dear Honorable President, President Pro Tem, and Members of the Detroit City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Office of the Ombudsman's FY 2025–2026 budget analysis and strategic direction as we work to strengthen service delivery for the residents of Detroit. Since assuming office on October 6, 2025, my administration initiated a comprehensive 90-day transition and assessment period, during which we engaged with 21 City of Detroit department directors and their teams to evaluate departmental effectiveness, accessibility, and responsiveness.

Our internal audit identified an approximate 80% complaint closure rate, alongside a significant backlog of cases dating back to 2021. In response, we partnered with department leadership to reestablish expectations for timely resolution, implemented shared tracking systems, and collaborated with our complaint management vendor to enhance system functionality and transparency.

Today, the Office of the Ombudsman is undergoing a critical transformation—from a reactive complaint-response model to a proactive, data-informed, and community-centered approach. This shift is grounded in five key strategic priorities outlined in this report. During this reporting period, our office processed 3,462 complaints and 844 web-based submissions. We hosted more than 50 community engagement events, reached over 4,150 seniors, conducted 12 targeted educational outreach sessions, and launched the Monthly Ombudsman Podcast Breakfast Series featuring city department leaders.

We have strengthened internal operations through strategic staff reorganization, led by Chief of Staff Linda Wesley and Deputy Chief and Education Assistant Ombudsman Allen Montgomery, M.Ed. Their leadership has improved accountability and efficiency internally, and each Assistant Ombudsman is now aligned with a City Council District and partnering with the Department of Neighborhoods to enhance service awareness and deliver a more seamless, resident-centered experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Gay-Dagnogo, M. Ed.
City of Detroit Ombudsman



Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 114
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone: 313•224•6000
Facebook: City of Detroit Ombudsman Office

TABLE OF CONTENTS

◆ CITY OF DETROIT ◆
OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE — FY 2025–2026

Section I 90-Day Audit Findings, Analysis and Complaints Data

Section II Complaints by City Council Districts (D1-D7) and Zip Codes

Section III Transition, Recommendations, Community Engagement & Conclusion

SECTION I — 90-DAY AUDIT FINDINGS

October 2025 – January 2026

5,500*

Open Cases Found

2,357

Legacy Online Complaints

844

Web Submissions

21

Directors Met

Key Audit Findings

- Approximately 5,500 open cases identified, requiring immediate triage and case management restructuring
- Discovery of 2,357 legacy complaints submitted online dating as far back as 2021 — requiring full reconciliation with the Office's technology vendor
- 844 web-based submissions identified and logged for processing
- Backlog traced to capacity gaps and lack of cross-departmental tracking infrastructure
- Implemented shared Smartsheet tracking systems with BSEED, DPW, GSD, and DWSD
- New intake protocols established to ensure no resident inquiry goes unaddressed

CASES: OPEN VS. CLOSED – FEBRUARY 2025 – FEBRUARY 2026

85% — 2,951

Cases Closed

15% — 511

Cases Open / Being Resolved

The Office significantly reduced the inherited backlog through Smartsheet tracking and coordinated departmental engagement across BSEED, DPW, GSD, and DWSD.

COMPLAINTS & RESOLUTION RATE BY DEPARTMENT

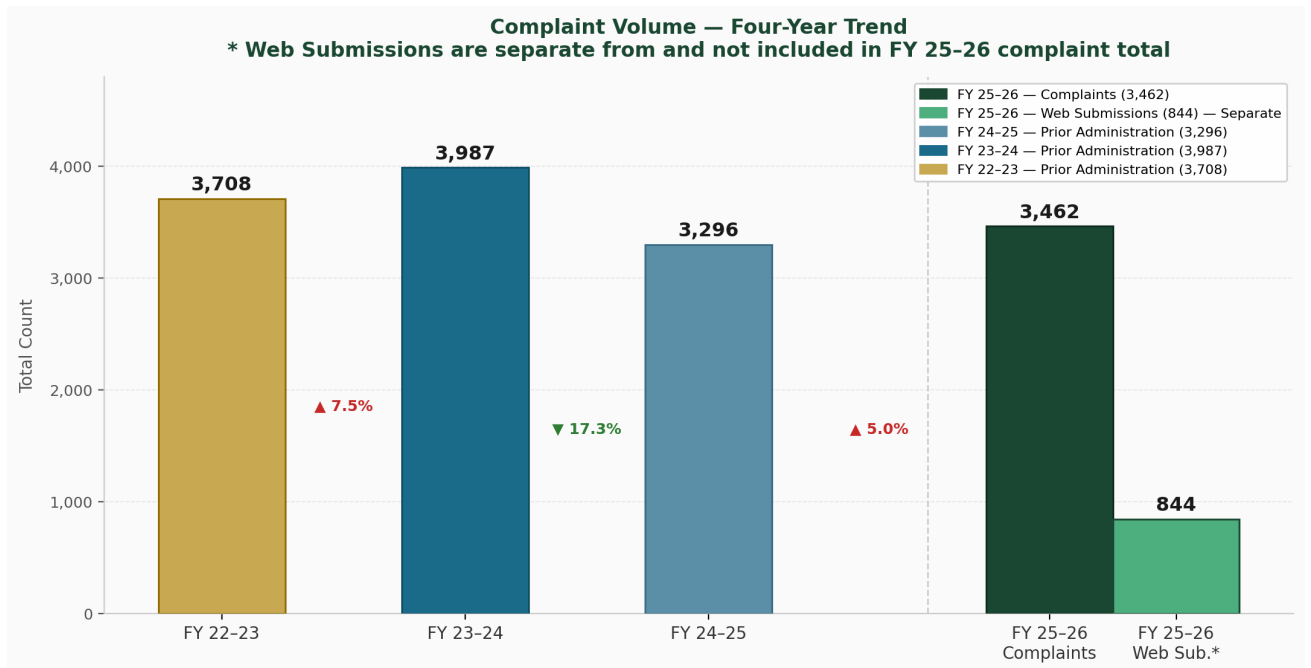
February 2025 – February 2026

Department	Complaints	% of Total	Closed	Rate %
BSEED (Buildings, Safety Eng. & Environmental)	2,058	59.00%	1,982	96%
General Services (GSD)	200	5.78%	171	86%
DWSD (Water & Sewerage)	223	6.44%	158	71%
DPD (Police Department)	253	7.31%	198	78%
DLBA (Detroit Land Bank Authority)	123	3.55%	96	78%
DPW (Public Works)	238	6.87%	179	75%
Finance	88	2.54%	69	78%
Administrative Hearings	22	0.64%	20	91%
Municipal Parking	13	0.38%	10	77%
Fire	6	0.17%	4	67%
Human Resources	3	0.09%	3	100%
CRIO	4	0.12%	4	100%
Law	7	0.20%	6	86%
DDOT (Transportation)	14	0.40%	9	64%
Health	7	0.20%	5	71%
PLD	5	0.14%	5	100%
P&DD	1	0.03%	1	100%
Elections	5	0.14%	3	60%
Recreation	1	0.03%	1	100%
Non Departmental & Non Jurisdictional	23	0.66%	23	100%
TOTAL / OVERALL RATE	3,462	100%	2,951	85%

Total of 3,462 complaints processed. Closed case counts reflect data through the current reporting period.

Trend Data — Complaint Volume | Four-Year Overview

February 2022 – February 2026 · Comparative complaint data across all reporting periods

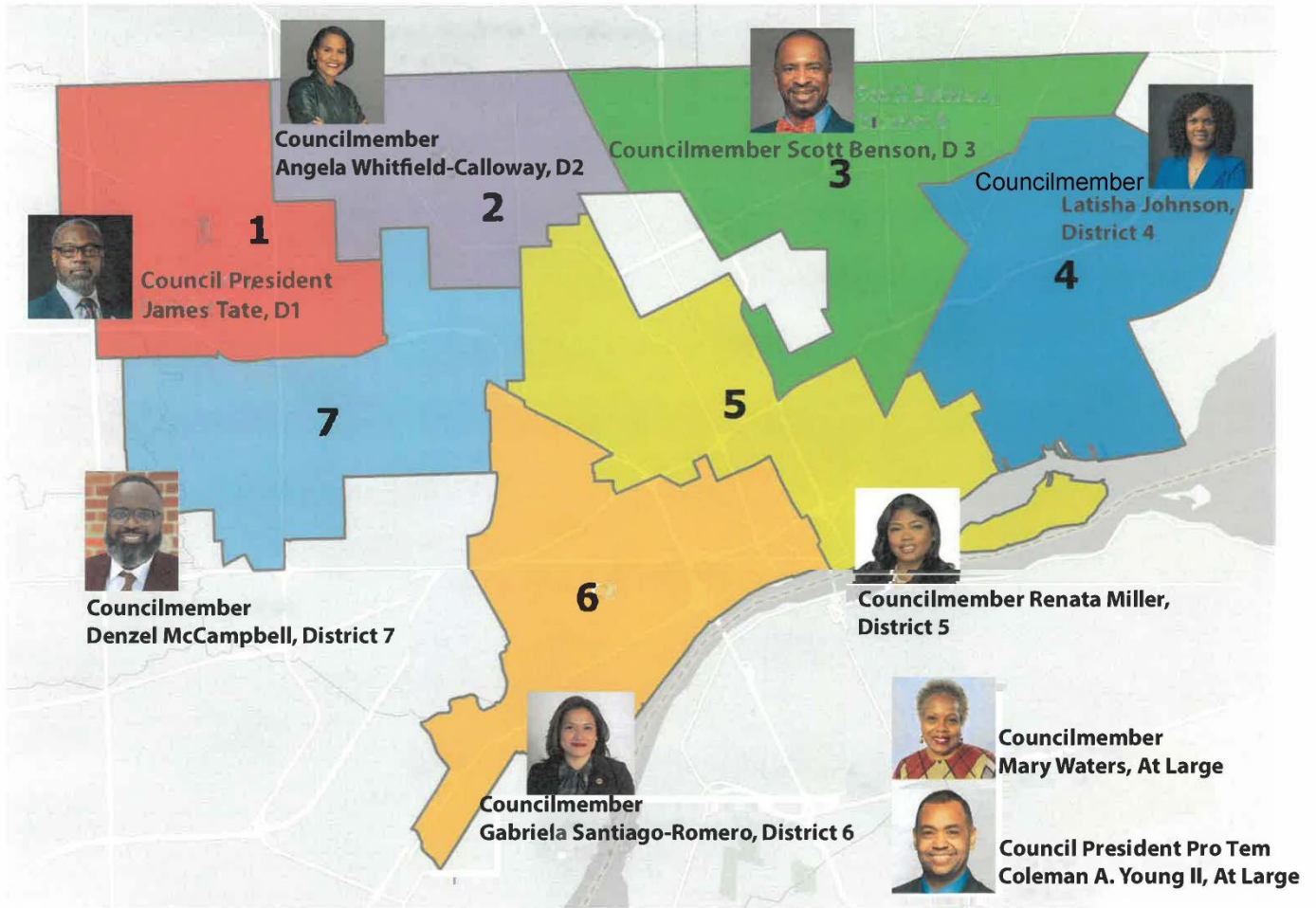


Summary — Total Complaints by Reporting Period

Reporting Period	Total Complaints
FY 2022–2023	3,708
FY 2023–2024	3,987
FY 2024–2025	3,296
FY 2025–2026	3,462
FY 2025–2026 — Web Submissions *	844

* Web Submissions (844) are NOT included in the FY 2025–2026 complaint total of 3,462. They are in addition to the 3,462 complaints that were identified by our vendor and are currently being logged and reconciled by staff to determine the appropriate complaint category

SECTION II — Complaints by City Council Districts (D1-D7) and Zip Codes



Detroit City Council 2026

COMPLAINTS BY COUNCIL DISTRICT	
February 2025 – February 2026	
City Council District	Complaints Received
District 1	477
District 2	540
District 3	793
District 4	444
District 5	438
District 6	324
District 7	400
Other	47
TOTAL	3,462

SECTION II — (D1-D7) Highest Complaint Volume by Department

District 1 | Council President James Tate

Total Complaints 477	BSEED GSD DWSD 345	DPW DPD 30 33
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Debris	27	
Abandoned Vehicles	16	

District 2 | Councilmember Angela Whitfield-Calloway

Total Complaints 540	BSEED GSD DWSD 381	DPW DPD 49 50
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Abandoned Vehicles	18	
Debris	27	

District 3 | Councilmember Scott Benson

Total Complaints 793	BSEED GSD DWSD 604	DPW DPD 34 71
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
Abandoned Vehicles	39	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Debris	27	

District 4 | Councilmember Latisha Johnson

Total Complaints 444	BSEED GSD DWSD 337	DPW DPD 33 31
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Debris	27	
Squatters	4	

SECTION II — (D1-D7) Highest Complaint Volume by Department pg.2

District 5 | Councilmember Renata Miller

Total Complaints 438	BSEED GSD DWSD 310	DPW DPD 42 22
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Sidewalks	14	
Abandoned Vehicles	13	

District 6 | Councilmember Gabriela Santiago-Romero

Total Complaints 324	BSEED GSD DWSD 211	DPW DPD 20 15
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Debris	27	
Sidewalks	8	

District 7 | Councilmember Denzel McCampbell

Total Complaints 400	BSEED GSD DWSD 288	DPW DPD 30 29
Top Complaint Type	Count	
Illegal Dumping	109	
High Grass/Weeds	37	
Abandoned Vehicles	12	
Debris	27	

SECTION II — Complaints by Zip Code & Maps

COMPLAINTS BY ZIP CODE

February 2025 – February 2026

Zip Code	Complaints	% of Total
48201	15	0.43%
48202	57	1.65%
48203	144	4.16%
48204	173	5.00%
48205	246	7.11%
48206	104	3.01%
48207	56	1.62%
48208	34	0.98%
48209	54	1.56%
48210	61	1.76%
48211	45	1.30%
48212	102	2.95%
48213	281	8.17%
48214	87	2.15%
48215	36	1.04%
48216	17	0.49%
48217	29	0.84%
48218	1	0.03%
48219	201	5.81%
48221	184	5.32%
48223	86	2.49%
48224	176	5.08%
48225	4	0.11%
48226	74	2.14%
48227	228	6.59%
48228	190	5.49%
48234	294	8.49%
48235	215	6.21%
48236	16	0.46%
48238	208	6.01%
48239	7	0.20%
Other	37	1.07%
TOTAL	3,462	100%

Zip Code	Complaints	% of Total
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SECTION II — Complaints by Zip Code — Geographic Distribution

February 2025 – February 2026 · 3,462 Total Complaints · 31 Zip Codes

250+ Critical	200–249 Very High	150–199 High	100–149 Elevated	50–99 Moderate	1–49 Low
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Complete Zip Code Complaint Data — Ranked by Volume				
ZIP	Neighborhood	#	%	Volume
48234	N of 7 Mile / NE	294	8.49%	
48213	Far NE / East Warren	281	8.17%	
48205	NE Detroit / Osborn	246	7.11%	
48227	Grandmont / Rosedale	228	6.59%	
48235	Greenfield / McNichols	215	6.21%	
48238	Dexter / Livernois	208	6.01%	
48219	Brightmoor / Fenkell	201	5.81%	
48228	Warrendale / W Side	190	5.49%	
48221	Bagley / Sherwood Forest	184	5.32%	
48224	East English Village	176	5.08%	
48204	Dexter / Woodbridge	173	5.00%	
48203	Highland Park / Palmer Pk	144	4.16%	
48206	Boston-Edison	104	3.01%	
48212	NE Detroit / Banglatown	102	2.95%	
48214	E Jefferson / Chalmers	87	2.15%	
48223	Rosedale Park / NW	86	2.49%	
48226	Downtown Detroit	74	2.14%	
48210	Mexicantown / Springwells	61	1.76%	
48202	New Center / TechTown	57	1.65%	
48207	East Jefferson	56	1.62%	
48209	SW Detroit / Junction	54	1.56%	
48211	E Grand Blvd	45	1.30%	
48215	Grosse Pointe Pk border	36	1.04%	
48208	Corktown	34	0.98%	
48217	River Rouge border	29	0.84%	
48216	Southwest / Hubbard Farms	17	0.49%	
48236	Grosse Pointe border	16	0.46%	
48201	Midtown / Wayne State	15	0.43%	
48239	Redford border	7	0.20%	
48225	Harper Woods border	4	0.11%	
48218	River Rouge (partial)	1	0.03%	

Source: City of Detroit Office of the Ombudsman - FY 2025–2026 Complaints Report color reflect complaint volume per zip code tabulation area. Zip codes with fewer than 5 complaints shown in blue.

SECTION III — 90-Day Plan Findings, Recommendations & Conclusion

90-DAY TRANSITION PLAN SUMMARY

October 2025 – January 2026



Upon taking office on October 6, 2025, Ombudsman Gay-Dagnogo launched a structured 90-day transition plan to assess Office capacity, identify systemic challenges, and establish a clear path toward greater efficiency.

- Conducted comprehensive Office needs assessment
- Met with legacy staff to assess internal operations and complaint intake.
- Met with CMTS Complaint Management Vendor
- Met with 21 City of Detroit Department Directors
- Performed full audit — revealing 5,500 open cases
- Met with City of Detroit DoIT leadership
- Established Smartsheet cross-departmental tracking
- Identified 2,357 legacy online submissions Wingswept

Staff Restructuring, Community Engagement, Education, and Integration



Linda Wesley, Chief of Staff



Deputy Chief of Staff & Assistant Education Ombudsman Allen Montgomery, M.Ed.

- Restructured complaint intake and assignment workflows
- Staff assigned to each Council District
- Staff CRIO: Civil Rights Lunch & Learn
- Staff Training: Ethics & Communication
- Detroit Office of Neighborhood Partnership
- Interdepartmental Cross training to improve constituent services
- Interdepartmental Shadowing: Tax Center
- Interdepartmental: HRD Ride Along
- CRIO & The Office of Disability Affairs Project Partnership

OMBUDSMAN RECOMMENDATIONS

FY 2025–2026 Strategic Priorities

The following recommendations are informed by the Office's 90-day needs assessment, complaint data analysis, departmental engagement, and community feedback.

I. Accessibility & Equity in City Services



A ASL Accessibility Notification Requirement

Implement a standardized accessibility notification policy across all departments to require notice on:

- Event flyers and promotional materials
- Special Event applications and permits
- Licensing applications
- Public meeting notices
- Departmental websites and digital communications

Rationale: Approximately 25,000–45,000 Detroit residents may be deaf or hard of hearing.

II. Strengthening Accountability & Compliance

A Enhanced Enforcement for BSEED Violations

- Establish direct referral pathway for unresolved BSEED and code violation
- Escalate Penalties for repeat offenders i.e. lien on properties to prevent the transfer or sale of property.
- Work with State Legislature and LARA to advance transparency policy and to identify property owners.

Rationale: BSEED inspectors report difficulties in identifying LLC property owners. Persistent non-compliance creates unsafe living conditions disproportionately impacting vulnerable residents.

B Legislative Fix for LLCs & Co-op Property Managers

Pursue legislative remedies addressing the accountability gap for LLCs and co-op management entities:

- Advocate for stricter LLC property ownership disclosure requirements
- Support legislation requiring co-op boards to meet minimum code compliance standards
- Partner with City Law Dept. and state legislators to close enforcement loopholes

Rationale: Current legal structures allow LLCs and co-ops to evade accountability. Legislative reform is essential.

III. Internal Operations and Government Transparency

A Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with AI Access

Require all departments to develop publicly accessible SOPs:

- Publish SOPs on City of Detroit website
- Integrate AI tools for applications, processes, and FAQs
- Ensure real-time, accurate information access for all residents

Rationale: Accessible SOPs empower residents with real-time information, reducing confusion and delays.

B 24-Hour AI Complaint Receptionist “Try our Demo: Dial (313) 771-xxxx”

Implement AI-powered 24-hour complaint intake ensuring no resident goes unheard:

- Round-the-clock complaint intake and auto-acknowledgement
- Intelligent routing to appropriate departments
- Real-time case status updates for residents

Rationale: A 24-hour AI receptionist dramatically improves accessibility and eliminates backlog risk.

C City of Detroit Podcast & Media Studio

Establish a centralized Podcast Studio and Communications Hub producing:

- Program explainers and policy updates
- Service navigation guides
- Multilingual and accessible community content

Rationale: A shared platform reduces misinformation and prevents avoidable complaints.

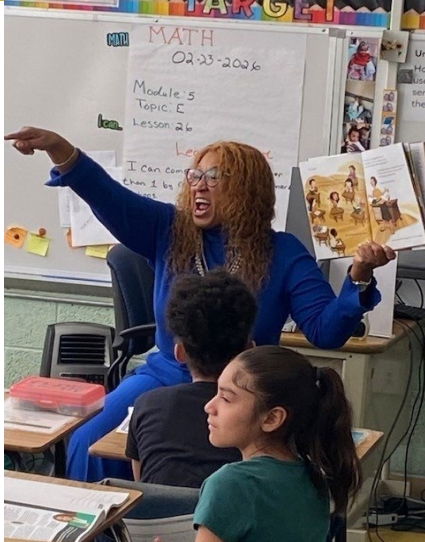


DABO Podcast: Featuring Director Tammy Daniels, DLBA



DABO Podcast: Featuring Director Willie Donwell, BOR

IV. External Education & Community-Based Solutions



A After-School Programming in Recreation Centers

Expand after-school programming in all City recreation centers near DPSCD schools:

- Align programming with school dismissal times
- Provide academic, recreational, and enrichment opportunities
- Partner with DPSCD and community organizations

Rationale: Existing recreation centers create cost efficiency while providing safe environments for youth.

B Detroit Reads Literacy Partnership Pilot

Launch a citywide Detroit Reads initiative:

- After-school literacy programs in libraries and recreation centers
- Partner with educators and literacy organizations
- Engage parents alongside students on weekends and after school

Rationale: Literacy is foundational to long-term success.

C Mental Health & Family Support Services

Establish after-school mental health and family counseling at recreation centers:

- Community-based mental health support
- Licensed provider and community organization partnerships
- Focus on youth, families, and vulnerable populations

Rationale: Addressing mental health needs at the community level improves well-being and reduces long-term challenges.

D Collaborative Transportation Strategy for Families

Develop a City of Detroit–DPSCD collaborative transportation model:

- Develop city ordinance to address surging prices of transportation during school hours
- Address rising transportation costs during school hours
- Improve access to after-school programming
- Coordinate city and school district resources

Rationale: A coordinated system improves access while reducing service duplication.

FEBRUARY 2025 – SEPTEMBER 2025
PRE-TRANSITION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

25

Outreach Events

25

Satellite Offices

12

Schools Reached

5

Events Volunteered

OMBUDSMAN SHERRY GAY-DAGNOGO, M.ED. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
October 2025 – February 2026

22

Community Engagement
Events

12

Interdepartmental Resource
Tables

5

Strategic Media Events

4,150

Seniors Reached



Community & Legislative Outreach

Media & Podcast

- 3 Holiday Turkey Giveaway Events: Detroit PAL, Former NFL Players, 8th Precinct PD
- Senior Outreach — Detroit Area Agency on Aging, Holiday Senior Building Outreach
- 'Bridging the Gap from Detroit to Lansing' Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and City Leadership
- 12 Interdepartmental Resource Tables: City Council, Healthy Homes, Board of Review, DLBA, Tax Dept., Wayne County Treasurer
- 12 Education Outreach Events: African American History Month, March is Reading Month, State of the Schools, SER Metro

- Podcast Community Outreach Breakfast Series launched
- Partner: Director Willie Donwell, Board of Review
- Partner: Director Ebony L. Whitelow, Treasury
- Partner: Director Tammy Daniels, Detroit Land Bank Authority
- Detroit Is Different community platform feature

	FY2025 Actual		FY2026 Adopted		FY2027 Mayor Proposed	
	General Fund	All Funds	General Fund	All Funds	General Fund	All Funds
Total Revenues	-	12,000	-	12,000	-	-
Total Expenditures	1,487,886	1,488,058	2,021,229	2,033,229	1,954,312	1,954,312
Net Tax Cost	1,487,886	1,476,058	2,021,229	2,021,229	1,954,312	1,954,312

Positions (by FTE)

	2/4/2026 Actual	FY2026 Adopted	FY2027 Mayor Proposed	FY2028 Forecast	FY2029 Forecast	FY2030 Forecast
General Fund	11.00	15.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00
Non-General Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Positions	11.00	15.00	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00

3 Year Ramp Up: Proportional Funding		
Budget Cycle	Allocation	FTEs
FY 2024	\$1,457, 595	14
FY 2025	\$1,666.595	14
FY 2026	\$1.718,477	15
FY 2027 Budget Request	\$2,334,064.54	15
Proposed FY 2027	\$1,954,312	14

Request to be Restored: Annual Ramp Up \$314,752 + \$65K (FTE)

CONCLUSION & BUDGET REQUEST

These recommendations reflect a strategic shift toward a more proactive, integrated, and resident-centered government. By prioritizing accessibility, accountability, education, and collaboration, the City of Detroit can improve service delivery while ensuring greater efficiency, transparency, and equity for all residents. Our office is committed to building on this foundation and delivering measurable results for every Detroiter.

We humbly ask your honorable body to restore the funding with the appropriate annual ramp up as outlined by the adopted *proportional funding ordinance* to ensure that our office can continue the citizen focused trajectory outlined in this report.

Sherry Gay-Dagnogo, M.Ed.

City of Detroit Ombudsman

"Together we're turning challenges into opportunities to improve the quality of life for Detroiters!"

2 Woodward Ave, Suite 114 · Detroit, MI 48226 · OMBUDSMAN@DETROITMI.GOV



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