



<<TO HELL AND BACK: Hearse procession goes for record. 12A

BING'S DETROIT: Hundreds attend forum on city plan. 15A

AN HONOR: Tickets available for Shining Light Awards. 9A



ROCHELLE RILEY SAYS SHE HAS WATCHED CITY GROW UP, RIGHT BEFORE HER EYES

## Decade in Detroit cause to celebrate

For the first time in 10 years, I celebrated my anniversary.

I began my life at the Detroit Free Press on Sept. 11, 2000. A year later, terror struck, and it has taken years for America, for all of us, to see Sept. 11 with anything except sorrow.

But on my 10th anniversary at the paper, I celebrated a city that out-of-town friends look at in sympathy.

They don't see what I see. The people. And the purpose.

My celebration was an intimate dinner with friends, close friends, girlfriends. If you missed it, don't worry — I'll be celebrating all year. With respect to Facebook and the social networks that connect us with new people every minute, my dinner companions were people I share joys and tears and horror stories with — face-to-face friends.

### More than a party

Hanging out at Mosaic, having martinis and champagne, dancing together in the heart of Greektown was not just a moment in time, not just another party.

This was a declaration of independence from anger and frustration at a city that works your nerves but pulls at your heart.

This was a moment to remind me — and anyone who thinks about it — that everyone isn't your friend.

It's a hard lesson for young people who call people they just met their best friends. They are losing the meaning of friendship. They are losing the ability to understand intimacy, to create boundaries.

### Here, friendship is key

In a city like Detroit, friendship is important. No, friendship is necessary. When you're in a war to save a city, you want to be in the trenches with people you trust. When Detroit gets kicked around, you want to fight back with people who love Motown.

Who clings to a city that seems bent on self-destruction? Those who knew it when Hudson's stood tall, and the street cars ran, and kids could take the bus anywhere safely, and Cass Tech drew kids from the suburbs.

Who else clings to a city that seems to fight its own renaissance? Those who move here because everyone doesn't get a chance to rebuild a city, rebuild a school district, rebuild hope ... those who can see the what-if, those who want to rebuild a relationship between people in Detroit and people who used to be in Detroit and people who want to be in Detroit.

My very first column was a rally against school vouchers and a call for the Detroit Public Schools to be shut down. Yes, I made an entrance.

The school district still needs to be shut down and reopened under new management. The city still needs to better spend its declining resources. But the most exciting thing about being in Detroit for the past 10 years has been watching a city grow up, right before my eyes.

That ... and the friends. ■ CONTACT ROCHELLE RILEY: RRILEY99@FREEPRESS.COM. TO ORDER ROCHELLE'S BOOK "RAISING A PARENT: LESSONS MY DAUGHTER TAUGHT ME WHILE WE GREW UP TOGETHER," GO TO [ROCHELLERILEY.COM](http://ROCHELLERILEY.COM).

# 'We have no choice' but to cut

## Wayne Co. budget debated

By STEVE NEAVLING  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

For the next few weeks, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano will have a lot on his shoulders.

The county is more than \$250 million in the hole, the result of a deficit that ballooned 54% over the past five years, when property values began their precipitous decline, finance records show.

During that time, the county cut 1,600 jobs, reduced health care costs by \$24 million, created furloughs and reduced services.

Now, Ficano wants to attack the deficit more aggressively, but his \$2.1-billion

spending plan for 2010-11 is not gaining steam with the County Commission. The panel meets Thursday to adopt the budget, which takes effect Oct. 1.

"We've made progress, but the situation is going to get worse until the board gets serious about eliminating the deficit," Ficano said.

Under Ficano's plan, the county would eliminate discretionary bonus checks for retirees at a savings of \$34 million. He also wants to use all of this year's roughly \$45 million in state funding to cut the deficit.

In addition, Ficano wants to cut wages 10% for many employees, eliminate a program that cleans up blighted proper-

ty, privatize jail food service and reduce the budgets of his office by 38%, the Treasurer's Office by 25% and the Clerk's Office by 18%.

"This is not an easy time, but we have no choice," he said.

The issue of pay cuts has been a contentious one for Ficano and county workers.

Earlier this year, Ficano asked the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees to take a 10% pay cut, as other unions have. The union rejected the proposal. Ficano then instituted furloughs, closing some offices on certain days.

And on Friday, the county announced the cancellation of healthcare benefits for employees laid off this summer after a court-ordered delay.



Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano says it's either hundreds of layoffs or cuts to the county retirement system.

Ficano's budget-cutting tactics landed him in court, first in a suit by former Sheriff Warren Evans over the layoff of deputies, then in suit by AFSCME over wage and benefit cuts.

The commission plans to submit its own budget, one that could eclipse Ficano's plan by \$50 million or more, because commissioners want to keep the bonus checks and use \$45 million in state funding to finance the Sheriff's Office, juvenile justice programs and

other services.

"If we don't fund public safety properly, businesses aren't going to come here," said Commissioner Laura Cox, a Livonia Republican who heads the Ways and Means Committee. "We have a very difficult job to do."

Cox said the commission still has a lot to consider before approving the budget. "A lot of things are on the table, and we are still very much in the discussion phase," Cox said.

Ficano warned commissioners that keeping the bonus checks could force the county to lay off 400-500 workers and result in the reduction of services, such as warm-meal delivery to seniors.

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# DECONSTRUCTING DETROIT



July photo by ERIC SEALS/Detroit Free Press

Volunteers help the Motor City Blight Busters recover materials from demolished properties and recycle them into useful items. "Our neighborhoods are filled with resources," said Blight Busters founder John George, whose group plans to dismantle 10 homes this year.



See a photo gallery of Detroit deconstruction projects

## Instead of demolition, city urged to recycle

By NAOMI R. PATTON  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

It was big news this spring when Detroit Mayor Dave Bing announced that the city would demolish 3,000 vacant properties by the end of this year.

As of this month, officials say 1,575 city-owned properties have been either demolished or are under contract for demolition.

With far less fanfare, five city-owned abandoned houses in the Brightmoor neighborhood also came down this summer. They were not demolished, however, but rather deconstructed.

The houses have been taken apart — mostly by hand — by the Motor City Blight Busters with cooperation from the city. The plan is to salvage the materials to be reused, repurposed or recycled.

Dismantling a house is a slow, more expensive process compared with demolishing one, but it is a process that cities across the country are starting to embrace.

The City of Detroit currently lacks a comprehensive deconstruction policy — in-

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# Cop's death puts spotlight on reserve officers

By ERIC D. LAWRENCE  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The death of an auxiliary police lieutenant in Taylor and his funeral last week focused public attention on the important role that auxiliary officers play in Michigan law enforcement.

Also called reserve police officers, auxiliary police assist law enforcement agencies across the state with a variety of functions, from security at high school sporting events to booking prisoners.

Specific duties, minimum criteria for serving and compensation — if there is any — are determined by the individual law enforcement agencies who utilize them.

"It's very hard to explain to



Northville Township Reserve Lt. Bill Barent says it's important to build good relationships with regular and reserve officers.

people why we do what we do," said Ronald Vaughn, chief of the Taylor Auxiliary Police Department, which has 46 volunteer officers. "You're putting your life on the line and you're doing things that other people would not ... for free. These guys all have regular full-time jobs, and they do it out of their hearts."

When Taylor Auxiliary Police Lt. Dan Kromer was struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver Sept. 7, he had stopped

along I-94 to help a lost couple parked along the shoulder of the expressway.

Kromer, 54, of Newport served as a volunteer auxiliary officer for 20 years in Taylor. His son, Joseph, said being an auxiliary officer was one of the most important things in Dan Kromer's life.

Several organizations that advocate for or monitor law enforcement agencies in Michigan said they do not keep statistics on the number of auxiliary officers statewide.

But auxiliary officers are used by dozens of departments across the state, including the sheriff's offices in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties and the Detroit Police Department.

In Northville Township, re-

serve officers — the department has 13 and two in training — earn \$8 per hour and work a minimum of one night per month. The compensation is intended to offset expenses the officers incur, such as for the handguns they carry.

Township Public Safety Director John Werth said the reserve officers work under the direction of full-time officers.

Though they attend a separate academy, Werth said the officers go through the same regular department training as his full-time officers.

Northville Township Reserve Lt. Bill Barent, 58, a retired Ford worker who previously served in the Dearborn Heights reserve force, said training is key in building a

good relationship between regular and reserve officers.

"We want to make sure our regular officers feel comfortable with them," Barent said.

For many law enforcement departments, the most obvious benefit of having a reserve unit is the ability to add personnel at limited or no cost.

The Macomb County Sheriff's Office has 291 reserve officers who work in a variety of roles, including its mounted, aviation and marine units. The reserves provided 36,141 donated hours in 2009.

More than \$1 million, "that's how much they save us," said Macomb County Sheriff's Capt. Brenda Baker.

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# DECONSTRUCT: City called on to reuse, recycle

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cluding what to do with the salvaged materials or with any revenue generated from the materials.

A deliberate deconstruction policy would create jobs and potential retail and revenue opportunities from the sale of the recycled materials, stimulating the city's overall economy, policy proponents say.

Blight Busters founder John George said a policy would help stabilize neighborhoods being picked over by scrappers.

"Our neighborhoods are filled with resources," George said. "(Deconstruction) could be a growth industry. ... We could create jobs, create cash flow and revitalize neighborhoods."

George is a huge advocate for deconstruction of abandoned properties.

After spending the past 20 years demolishing and restoring homes in the city, he said he sees the city's blighted properties "as an asset instead of a liability."

Should Detroit's efforts take hold, the city would join a nationwide deconstruction movement that has grown in the past decade.

"It's a time and place where there's a mind-set for deconstruction. ... It just makes sense to recycle Detroit," said George, whose group plans to dismantle 10 homes this year in areas that have been designated by the federal government for neighborhood stabilization funds.

Worries about cost

Karla Henderson, Bing's group executive for Planning and Facilities, called the pilot program with Blight Busters a good start.

She said she and other city officials are in talks with deconstruction advocates "to help us shape what a policy will look like." Deconstruction will be a component of the city's demolition campaign in 2011, she said.

One stumbling block, however, to a full-scale deconstruction program is the labor cost.

It takes a few hours and \$5,000 to \$10,000 to demolish a house. It takes at least three days and \$12,000 to \$20,000 to deconstruct one.

Henderson said deconstruction is a viable option when cost-effective.

"The eradication of blight is a priority," Henderson said. But, with all the homes the city is trying to take down — at least 10,000 by the end of Bing's first term — she said, "We can't pay a 50% higher premium for deconstruction."

She said the city has been approached by more than one group to do deconstruction,



July photos by ERIC SEALS/Detroit Free Press

Much of the material the Motor City Blight Busters recovers in deconstruction, such as wood flooring and trim, cabinets and repurposed 2-by-4s, end up in its soon-to-open Motor City Java House. "You actually save money. You get more for less," Blight Busters founder John George said.



Eric Robinson, 15, left, and Kevon Allen, 15, both of Detroit, sort wood to be reused. Across the country, municipalities are using grants and local resources to deconstruct homes and salvage the materials.

and by companies that want to recover or salvage the materials.

Yet she cautioned that when the city develops a policy that includes deconstruction, the emphasis will be on encouraging contractors to deconstruct homes, not on reselling the materials.

Henderson said the city would direct the distribution of the materials to salvage and recycling companies or partner with an agency or group to manage the distribution.

"There are certain things a city or municipality should not be in the business of," Henderson said.

"If there is a local infrastructure to take that mangled

stuff and sort it out and market it," deconstruction is a "real opportunity that's been identified to create jobs," said Julie Gevrenov, an environmental engineer with the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 5 in Chicago, which also covers Michigan.

Gevrenov has hosted reuse discussions across a six-state region to recommend incorporating deconstruction in municipal policies.

She said the jobs are not limited to additional labor hires by contractors, but also include jobs in recycling, remanufacturing and reuse-retail businesses.

"I don't think there's a community that's very far along," Gevrenov said.

A growing trend

Across the country in Chicago, Baltimore, and Oakland, Calif., and locally in Saginaw, municipalities are using federal and state grants and local resources to deconstruct homes and salvage the materials.

They often partner with local groups and sometimes use labor from ex-offender programs to deconstruct the houses.

In 2009, the City of Saginaw formed a public-private partnership with Habitat for Humanity Saginaw to develop its deconstruction policy and program. The program has pro-

vided jobs for those participating in the Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative.

Last year, the city dismantled 12 of the nearly 900 homes slated for demolition, said John Stemple, Saginaw's chief inspector. Two homes have been deconstructed this year.

The program costs \$1.5 million annually for staff, operations and equipment. It is funded by multi-year federal grants totaling \$6 million.

Stemple said the city's agreement with Habitat expedited the program because of the agency's resources and resale store.

The city has since purchased a warehouse to sort and store the deconstructed materials until they are suitable for resale or recycling. The agency plans to purchase a warehouse because the need is so great.

But, Stemple said, municipalities and other stakeholders won't see a return on their investment without a larger volume of deconstruction work, suggesting a deconstruction cooperative with Flint and Detroit could facilitate that volume.

'You get more for less'

Much of the material Blight Busters recovers, such as wood flooring and trim, cabinets, doors and repurposed 2-by-4s, end up in its Artist Vil-

Recycling a house

The process for Motor City Blight Busters begins with a residential property, though the same process can apply to many commercial properties.

■ Asbestos and other hazardous materials are removed.

■ All the metal (steel or copper) from plumbing or anything else in the structure is removed. Blight Busters gives the materials away.

■ Then all wood trim, flooring, doors, windows or cabinetry that can be reused or recycled is removed. On rarer occasions, workers recover granite, marble, chandeliers or other light fixtures. Some of those materials are used in the Blight Busters' Artist Village and a new coffeehouse they plan to open in old Redford in Detroit on Lahser. Other wood and shingles and roofing materials are removed and sent to Environmental Wood Solutions in Southfield.

■ Concrete materials are removed and sent to Detroit Recycled Concrete Co. in Detroit.

■ The remainder is sent to a waste management facility.

- NAOMI R. PATTON

lage and in its soon-to-open Motor City Java House.

"You actually save money. You get more for less," George said.

Bob Falk, president of the Building Materials Reuse Association and research engineer at the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wis., said most people don't realize that municipalities spend millions annually on landfill disposal.

"Deconstruction can keep the money in the community when you hire people from the community. ... Millions of pounds of materials can be used in that community," said Falk, who has spent nearly 20 years working on recycling waste wood. "Deconstruction can be part of a community rebuilding effort."

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# APPLAUD SHINING LIGHT WINNERS

## Tickets left for awards event

Four metro Detroiters who spend their lives forging partnerships that have improved the region will be honored at the Shining Light Regional Cooperation Awards breakfast on Oct. 14.

Winners of the awards, sponsored by the Free Press and the Metropolitan Affairs Coalition, are:

■ **Neal Shine Award for Exemplary Regional Leadership:** Ed Deeb, president and CEO of the Michigan Food and Beverage Association. Among his many accomplishments are efforts that set in motion the revival of Detroit's Eastern Market.

■ **Eleanor Josaitis Unsung Hero Award:** Ed Bagale, vice chancellor for government relations at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and Vernice Davis Anthony, president and CEO of the Greater Detroit Area Health Council. Bagale helped launch the Rouge River Gateway Partnership. Anthony is one of the region's most dynamic health care coalition builders.

■ **Dave Bing Future Leader Award:** Jeanette Pierce, co-founder of Inside Detroit, whose passion is showing off the city.

Tickets are still available to the 8 a.m. event at the Ford Conference & Event Center in Dearborn.

The best way to purchase tickets is online at [www.shininglightawards.com](http://www.shininglightawards.com).

Tickets also can be purchased by calling 248-336-8623 or by e-mailing [info@shininglightawards.com](mailto:info@shininglightawards.com).

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Pat Brenner, 33, of Pontiac, left, and Jim Ferrari, 46, of Waterford sand repurposed hardwood floors inside the Motor City Java House.

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