**PROJECT SCOPE:**

In its third season the league consists of teams representing 28 Detroit neighborhoods with nearly 800 registered participants, over 80 percent of whom are city residents.

**Accomplishments:**

- Has created nearly 30 neighborhood-based soccer teams that double as community organizing tools.
- Gotten nearly 800 residents of the city of Detroit more physically active on a regular basis.
- Improved name recognition of certain neighborhoods to new and old residents alike and inspired folks to explore new neighborhoods and businesses.
- Promoted community service, including several teams adopting vacant lots that they have converted into playable fields, as well as coaching youth soccer and participating in neighborhood cleanups.
- Created a regular meeting place for people from across the city to come together and enjoy each other’s company in a fun setting.
- Received national and local media attention, shedding a positive light on the city of Detroit.
- Nearly 30 individuals have specifically cited the league as the reason they moved to the city of Detroit.

**PROJECT DETAILS:**

**NAME:**
Detroit City Futbol League

**DATE:**
2010 to Present

**CATEGORIES:**
Community Organizing
Live, Work, Play

**THE GIST:**
A very recreational adult co-ed soccer league based around neighborhoods designed to bring communities together in a fun and unique way while marketing different areas of the city.
Organization:
The league operates as an LLC with currently five owners, one of whom operates as the league commissioner. The league is heavily structured around the captains of the neighborhood teams who are chosen by their teammates. With considerable input from the captains at annual meetings, the owners of the league make all of the final decisions.

Budget:
The league now operates on an annual budget of $17,000. In its first season, the league did not have referees and used homemade goals fashioned out of PVC piping, allowing it to operate on a budget of less than $4,000.

Funding:
The vast majority of the league’s revenue comes from $20 per season dues for players. The league also sells naming rights to fields to small businesses that are sponsors. The primary expenses are field rentals, referees, and equipment such as new goals.

Participants:
The league was designed to bring together neighbors in a fun and unique way. Team captains must live in their neighborhood and are expected to recruit players from within their neighborhood. Tools used to recruit neighbors include posters at local businesses, neighborhood listserves, and through community development corporations and other nonprofits specific to the neighborhood.

Inspiration:
The League was started as a means to bring people together in Detroit neighborhoods in a fun, healthy and relaxing way beyond traditional community organizing focused on fighting blight or crime. A secondary desire of the league was to promote and market the neighborhoods that make up the city. Great cities are made up of great neighborhoods and all too often people in the city of Detroit, and especially in the surrounding areas, are unaware of the neighborhoods that make up the city.
Actions Taken:

1) **IDENTIFY YOUR NEED AND OPPORTUNITY:**
   Most people understand the need to bring together neighbors in a new and fun way and sports are an obvious choice, but why soccer? There already existed several softball leagues in the city and soccer is a sport that most everyone is familiar with and anyone can play to some degree regardless of their skill level.

2) **GET LEGAL:**
   Athletic competitions, no matter how recreational you intend them to be, are physical and can lead to injuries. This is especially the case with adults participating in sports when they largely lead sedentary lifestyles. Work with an attorney to create an LLC and a waiver that every participant must sign, to shield you from as much personal liability as possible.

3) **SOLICIT NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIES:**
   For the league to succeed on a neighborhood level, it needed advocates in different neighborhoods. A list of well-connected people in strategic neighborhoods was brought together at an initial meeting to get feedback on the idea. These people weren’t selected because of their athletic prowess or likelihood of playing but because they knew neighbors who would be interested and potentially could take the lead as captains. It was important to get neighborhood captains that weren’t already over-committed and could dedicate time and assion to forming a team of their neighbors.

4) **MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE:**
   For the league to be an effective community organizing tool, it was important for it to be as accessible as possible. League fees are kept to $20 per player (dramatically below any comparable leagues), and the rules were simplified to discourage physical contact to gear the gameplay towards individuals who have not played soccer since grade school or maybe never at all.

5) **PROMOTE GOOD DESIGN:**
   As a marketing tool for the various neighborhoods in the city, the league stressed good design and solicited graphic designers to come up with logos for each of the early teams. The league worked with small retail shops to sell teams’ extra jerseys to help spread the word about the neighborhoods and the league.

6) **MAKE IT MORE THAN ABOUT THE GAME:**
   One of the most popular aspects of the league is the official post-game bar night. Each team in the league has an official bar and after each game night the league has a meet-up at a rotating list of bars in different neighborhoods. The Tuesday bar night regularly draws more than 300 players, spectators, and others and has been known to make an unsuspecting bar dry in less than an hour. These bar nights, along with the games, have become the meeting place for young and active people across the city spawning all kinds of new relationships and collaborations.
7) **MAKE IT ABOUT MORE THAN FUN:**
   Staying true to its original mission to find new ways to build stronger ties among neighbors, the league has a community development purpose. Each team is encouraged to do community service with points being assigned for completed projects. The points each team derives from their community service is used as a tie-breaker in the league standings and an award is given to the team that completes the most community service.

8) **MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY:**
   It was important to keep the league true to its original purpose which is more about community than soccer. As the league became better known, soccer players from across the metropolitan region tried to join up. To keep the league true to its original mission, a cap of five people was placed on the number of non-Detroit residents each team could have.

9) **DEVELOP CAPACITY:**
   Since the league is an all-volunteer operation, it was crucial to identify talented and qualified individuals that could help with basic tasks. A group of individuals were identified who help with the maintenance of the fields while another group handles the coordination of bar nights and the season-ending tournament, and another group coordinates and documents teams’ community service activity.

**Expert:**
Sean Mann, Founder and Commissioner, detroitcityfutbol@gmail.com

**Documents:**
- Articles of Incorporation
- Poster used for initial recruitment
- Poster promoting Copa Detroit 2011
- League Waiver
The Center for 21st Century Communities

Building 21st century communities
Experts from around the world—in academic, business, and public sectors alike—agree that investing in communities is a critical element to long-term economic development in the 21st century. Michigan’s future depends on its ability to attract and retain knowledge-based workers. Central to attracting this priceless commodity is place. Research proves that successful 21st century communities effectively leverage the assets summarized in this brochure. Learn more and stay engaged at mml.org.

Who we are...
The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. We are a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs; our people are dynamic, energetic, and highly approachable, passionately and aggressively pushing change to achieve better communities and a better Michigan.

What we know...
Never before have so many diverse interests, from academic researchers to the business community to government leaders, shared a single conclusion: Michigan’s future depends on its ability to attract knowledge-based workers. And what is central to attracting this priceless commodity? Place, specifically vibrant 21st century communities.

What we offer...
Through its Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3), the League provides education, technical assistance, public outreach, and unprecedented access to experts and resources. The 21c3 is a “one-stop-shop” for communities interested in creating and sustaining livable, desirable, and unique places that attract the highly skilled, creative, and talented workforce of the next century.