

Roaring Back: Detroit's Revival Through the Lions

It's a crisp midwest Sunday afternoon. Thousands of fans swarm Detroit's streets repping Honolulu blue as the leaves crunch beneath their feet. It's a big day in Detroit anytime the lions are playing. The beat of the street drummers and the cheers from fans fill your ears as you trek past Comerica Park into Ford Field. The energy is electric, it's something you can only feel while there. It is immersive and lively like the city that surrounds it.

It's not news to anyone that the Detroit Lions have quickly stolen the hearts of many Americans. Everyone loves an underdog story. This team has been battered and bruised. From being the first team in the NFL to lose [16](#) straight games. To Matt Patricia's disappointing run from 2018-2020, leaving Detroit with another record low franchise record. To the final straw to Motown's football mojo that would ultimately change Detroit for the better. On March 17th, 2021 the Detroit Lions [traded](#) beloved quarterback Mathew Stafford to the Los Angeles Rams in exchange for Jared Goff.

Detroit was seen as this cold, harsh place where sports and entertainment could not thrive. With the help of head coach Dan Campbell, the Lions have not only turned around their record, they have helped put Detroit back on the map. The team's success is more than just football, it's a symbol of resilience and grit in the city of Detroit.

As Detroit pushes itself forward, one question remains: how can the city sustain this newfound cultural and economic momentum, and more importantly what is holding Detroit back from reaching its full potential?

In 2022 Detroit was selected to host the 2024 NFL Draft, an honor that would boost the economy by [213](#) million dollars. More than [50 million](#) people watched the draft on TV. Through the Draft, outsiders saw a glimpse into the soul of Detroit, from the glam to the grit. Detroit developers, such as Christos Moisdes, claim that this was the first step in a long road for Detroit. “We all know the Draft gave us a big economic push we needed,” said Moisdes.

Moisdes is a key developer in Detroit for 400 Monroe Associates. Moisdes is a Detroit restaurateur, developer, and a director. With real estate holding in over 1 million square feet of industrial and residential properties including, Fishbone's Rhythm Cafe, The London Chophouse, and Atheneum Suites Hotel in GreekTown. Moisdes tells us how we can sustain this new wave of success for Detroit.

“Development and Entertainment go hand in hand.” Moisdes said. “Ultimately Sports draws people in, but you have to have the commerce and hospitality to back that up.”

According to Moisdes Detroit's hospitality sector is underwhelming, “To gain major events, Detroit needs 3000 more hotels” “Even Cities like Indianapolis have more hotels than us, which is why they get more large scale events.” Moisdes said. Detroit's lack of hotel density is one major reason we don't often hold large scale events like the Draft. According to [Crain's Detroit](#), For a city to host a superbowl, the NFL requires that the prospective city has to have a minimum number of hotel spaces within a one hour drive of the stadium, that equals 35% of the stadium's capacity.

For Detroit to host another superbowl or event of that scale, we would need around 23,000 hotel rooms surrounding Detroit. There are currently only around [5,000 rooms](#) in close proximity to downtown Detroit. To put it in perspective, Boston has a population of about 675,000, they have about [19,000](#) rooms available. With a population of 640,000, Detroit falls under Boston as the next largest city, yet it falls incredibly short when it comes to hotel capacity.

“To keep Detroit on the come up we need mass transit, and a more pedestrian friendly environment.” “It's gotta be a complete viewpoint on development, not just entertainment.” Moisdes said. While Detroit offers things like the Q-Line, and the People Mover, locals feel as if it's not adequate enough for their needs. A former Wayne State student Ary Khosla said, “Honestly, the Q-Line is disappointing most of the time, it's inconsistent, crowded, and unreliable.” “It definitely influenced me to leave the city a little bit, there is no consistent public transportation here at all.” More young people are moving to cities where they don't have to own cars. According to data from the [department of public transportation](#) there has been a significant decline in the amount of young drivers.

“We lack density in Downtown Detroit, I think we need about 500,000 more people living in the city to sustain these things like mass transit.” Moisdes told. Detroit's lack of density goes hand in hand with their lack of transportation. While the residential numbers in Detroit have started to [grow](#), the population is spread out across major points in the city. Population density directly affects the reach and frequency of public transit systems. According to the [2016 Regional Master Transit Plan for Southeast Michigan](#), the limited population of riders in a large geographic area makes it hard for legislators to justify the allocation of funds towards projects like mass transit.

According to the [Detroit Regional Chamber](#) only 33% of people living in the city have access to a car. Detroit's lack of transit is a huge economic barrier. These needs continue to go unmet as the [RTA](#) also says that 73% of millennials in Metro-Detroit want better mass transit. For the city to help this lack of density, there needs to be a huge shift in the mode of transportation for the pedestrian. The city who put the world on wheels needs to give wheels to its people, this is a huge factor in getting more young people to not only visit Detroit, but move and settle into Detroit.

The running success of the Lions definitely helps offset some of the coming challenges for Detroit, though the road to long term truly sustainable infrastructure is long. The city's revival has sparked great optimism for many, though we need more than just a sports team to develop.

As Detroit evolves it must address its shortcomings in infrastructure, density, and hospitality. Without a comprehensive approach attacking all ends, the city risks stalling out. The NFL has been a money making machine for Detroit from the Draft, to the city hosting its franchises first playoff games.

The big question still remains, will our success on the field continue to translate into economic and social prosperity? The Lions resurgence shows America what Detroit is capable of, but the real test lies within the government's ability to develop a city that works for everyone, not just visitors and event goers. As Moisdes put it, "Sports draw people in but you need the infrastructure to make them stay."