

Maggie (M. Margaret) DeSantis  
Biographical Summary

Maggie DeSantis is a native Detroiter who has worked in the community development field in Detroit for over forty years. She is a graduate of Wayne State University and Central Michigan University and the Pratt Institute-affiliated National Internship in Community Economic Development. After tenures at New Detroit, Inc. and Neighborhood Service Organization, she founded and was named the first Executive Director of the Warren/Conner Development Coalition (WCDC) in 1984 where she served as President/CEO until April, 2016. In its 40 years of existence WCDC - now the Eastside Community Network - has evolved into one of Detroit's largest and most respected community development organizations; having won the Crains Detroit Business first "Best Managed Non-Profit" in 1990; and the "Best Community Development Corporation" by Detroit LISC in the 1990s. In 1996 the organization was recognized with a "National Exemplary Award" by HHS, for its innovative "Youth on the Edge...of Greatness" program.

Through her 32-year tenure at WCDC/ECN, Ms. DeSantis played additional leadership roles on behalf of the City of Detroit. She was appointed by Mayor Coleman Young to Detroit's Casino Gaming Commission in 1988; Mayor Dennis Archer's five-person Executive Transition Committee in 1993; and was elected neighborhood representative on Detroit's Empowerment Zone Coordinating Council in the early 1990s. She served in 2017 as a Detroit Public Library Commissioner. In 1994, she was appointed by President William Clinton to serve as Board Chair of District Six of the Federal Home Loan Bank system, and served in that capacity through 2001.

Other past community leadership roles include: Boards of Directors of the Detroit Eastside Community Collaborative and the Villages CDC; Chairperson of the Villages CDC "GREEN Task Force." She was a founding member of CDAD (Community Development Advocates of Detroit), served as its Chair and Vice Chair; and was a founding member of CEDAM, the state CD trade association. She was instrumental in the formation of the late-seventies "Keep the Doors Open Campaign" which won the Detroit Library System's first millage.

Maggie recently completed six years of service as a founding Board Member of the Eastern Market Development Corporation and serves on the Board of the Chandler Park Conservancy, shepherding the initial fundraising efforts that have resulted in over \$10 million in new investment in Chandler Park since 2014. Maggie is also currently a City Council-appointed Commissioner for the Detroit Building Authority; and a Mayoral-appointed Commissioner for the Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority where she was elected three times as its Vice Chair.

Ms. DeSantis has received many awards and recognitions for her work. In 2000, she was chosen for the national Next Generation Leadership fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation. She has been the recipient of the NANBPW Professional Woman of the Year Award (1991), the Detroit AIA Charles A. Blessing Award (1993), the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan Community Builder Award (1995), the Ameritech "Dream Makers" award for Economic Development (2000); and in 2002 was named "Executive Woman of the Year" in Detroit by Grant Thornton Accounting Firm, Butzel Long Law Firm and Comerica Bank. In 2005 she received the "Real Estate Excellence Award" from the Urban Land Institute/Crain's Detroit Business; in 2009 received the East Detroit NAACP "W.E.B. Dubois Community Activist" award, the Payne-Pulliam "Door Opener" award, and the Friends School in Detroit "Revitalization of the City" award; in 2012 the Northeast Guidance Centers' "Community Builder" Award and in 2019 the Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance's "Waymaker Award." In 2018 Eastside Community Network created the annual "Maggie DeSantis Truth to Power Award" in her honor.

In 2016 after leaving ECN, Maggie continued to work for Detroit neighborhoods through her work as the founding Initiative Manager for "Building the Engine of Community Development in Detroit (BECDD)," an initiative dedicated to building a community development system for Detroit. Through 2021 when the resulting BECDD work was folded into CDAD, BECDD became a respected citywide process that brought 200+ multi-sector stakeholder organizations together, to design leadership pathways, funding streams, data/measurement systems, a housing rehab delivery system and other important supports for the community development sector. The projects created through BECDD are now being implemented through CDAD and other stakeholder organizations.

In 2020 Maggie launched "Community Development Strategies LLC," a consulting firm specializing in helping a variety of community-focused organizations to create and carry out authentic, equitable community development strategies for a variety of client organizations, including CDAD. She continues to work in this capacity today.

Maggie is the single mother of two adult daughters, Rosie DeSantis and Sparkle Berry; resides in Detroit's Jefferson-Chalmers community; and is an avid reader, baseball fan, outdoor griller, power-walker and road-tripper.