


David Whitaker, Esq.  
*Director*  
Irvin Corley, Jr.  
*Executive Policy Manager*  
Marcell R. Todd, Jr.  
*Director, City Planning Commission*  
Janese Chapman  
*Director, Historic Designation Advisory Board*

John Alexander  
Lakisha Barclift, Esq.  
Paige Blessman  
M. Rory Bolger, Ph.D., FAICP  
Lisa DiChiera  
Eric Fazzini, AICP  
Angela Gallegos  
Willene Green  
Christopher Gulock, AICP  
Marcel Hurt, Esq.

**City of Detroit**  
**CITY COUNCIL**  
LEGISLATIVE POLICY DIVISION  
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center  
Detroit, Michigan 48226  
Phone: (313) 224-4946 Fax: (313) 224-4336

Kimani Jeffrey  
Anthony W. L. Johnson  
Phillip Keller, Esq.  
Edward King  
Kelsey Maas  
Jamie Murphy  
Dolores Perales  
Analine Powers, Ph.D.  
W. Akilah Redmond  
Rebecca Savage  
Sabrina Shockley  
Renee Short  
Floyd Stanley  
Thomas Stephens, Esq.  
Timarie Szwed  
Theresa Thomas  
Ian Tomashik  
Ashley A. Wilson

TO: The Honorable City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director   
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: November 1, 2024

RE: Public Funding of the Detroit Renaissance Center

The Legislative Policy Division (LPD) has been requested by Council Member Latisha Johnson to prepare a report regarding public funding associated with the construction of the Detroit Renaissance Center.

The responses to Council Member Johnson’s questions below are primarily based on information received from the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC).

**Question number 1: What public funding did the Renaissance Center receive during its construction and development?**

Response: The DEGC noted that the construction of the Renaissance Center largely pre-dated the DEGC (incorporated in December 1977) and the DDA (established in 1976, with the first TIF Plan approved in 1978). Based on data on the Detroit Historical Society website, construction commenced in 1973, with the first tower opening in 1976 and additional towers opening by 1981.<sup>1</sup>

DEGC is not aware of public funding for the Renaissance Center during its construction and development. Per HistoricDetroit.org, “At \$350 million - the equivalent of \$1.8 billion in 2024 valuation, when adjusted for inflation - the Renaissance Center was the largest privately funded real estate development in the country’s history at that time.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Renaissance Center. <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/renaissance-center>

<sup>2</sup> Renaissance Center. <https://historicdetroit.org/buildings/renaissance-center>. LPD notes that this Historic Detroit.org article provides excellent background information on the development of the Renaissance Center.

LPD notes that “GM purchased the Renaissance Center from the Ford Motor Co. in 1996 and moved its world headquarters from the historic Cadillac Place state office complex in New Center. Private funding continued to support the Renaissance Center throughout its life. GM spent \$500 million on additional renovations.”<sup>3</sup>

**Question number 2: Did the Renaissance Center receive any public subsidies? If yes, have they expired and have any of them been renewed?**

Response: DEGC is not aware of public funding for the Renaissance Center during its construction and development. Per the above timeline, the construction of the Ren Cen pre-dates the DDA plan. Similarly, the construction pre-dates many of the other public acts that provide economic development incentives, such as PA 328 of 1998, PA 146 of 2000 and PA 210 of 2005.

Please let us know if we can be of any more assistance.

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<sup>3</sup> “What does Detroit’s RenCen stand for?” authored by Malachi Barrett of Bridge Detroit, dated April 24, 2024.