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## Market plants ideas in its boss

New CEO: Eastern Market a neighborhood model

By [Sheena Harrison](#)

Dan Carmody sees great potential in Detroit's **Eastern Market** district.

He envisions a thriving neighborhood that can attract crowds all week and fill a need for Detroit residents who don't have many grocery-buying options.

He also visualizes an area that can support new housing and business development, while maintaining the market's "grittiness" by supporting existing businesses and incorporating art into the district.

Carmody, who starts as president and CEO of the **Eastern Market Corp.** today, knows it will be a challenge to make his vision reality.

But it's a task for which he says he's ready and believes will be well worth doing.

"The Eastern Market seems to be almost a national model for growing a neighborhood that can be very sustainable going forward with the focus being on food," Carmody said.

**Profile**  
**Name:** Dan Carmody  
**Age:** 52  
**Family:** Wife, Vivian; six daughters, ages 15 to 25

Eastern Market renovations  
 Eastern Market Corp. is raising \$12.8 million to renovate three of the market's five sheds. The renovations will provide space for more vendors and increased days of operation year-round, and will include streetscape improvements.

**Hometown:** Oak Park, Ill.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. He also took MBA classes at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

Redeveloping portions of Rust Belt cities is something Carmody has been doing for more than 20 years. He spent 18 years leading the **Rock Island Economic Growth Corp. and Development Association** in Rock Island, Ill., and the last two years as president of the **Downtown Improvement District** in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Carmody said Rock Island struggled when the farming industry took a hit in the 1980s. He said the city lost about 40 percent of its real property value between 1984 and 1988.

**Market board members**

The nonprofit **Eastern Market Corp.** is governed by a 21-member board that represents the city of Detroit, the state, nonprofits that provide funding, farmers who use the sheds and businesses in the market area.

**George Jackson Jr.**, president and CEO, Detroit Economic Growth Corp.

**Robert Buckler**, president and COO, DTE Energy Co.

**Cathy Square**, director, Detroit Public Works Department

**Joseph Kuspa**, owner, Metro Produce Inc.

**Walter Watkins Jr.**, president, WCW Enterprises

**Helena Bengals**, president, A&H Produce

**Jim Bonahoom**, president, Wolverine Packing

**Morse Brown**, program manager, Multicultural Farmers

**Barbara-Rose Collins**, member, Detroit City Council

**Robert Davis**, Southeast Michigan project liaison, state of Michigan

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A blue rectangular advertisement for Lawrence Tech Graduate Open House. The text "Lawrence Tech" is in large white letters at the top. Below it, "Graduate Open House" is written in white. To the right, in smaller white text, it says "Explore advanced degrees", "Speak with program directors", and "Admission fee waived". At the bottom, it says "Nov. 29, 6-7:30 pm".

**Bert Dearing**, president, Bert's Marketplace

**Edward Deeb**, president, Michigan Business & Professional Association and Michigan Food & Beverage Association

**David DeVries**, owner, R. Hirt & Co.

**Douglass Diggs**, director, Detroit Planning & Development Department

**Michael Hamm**, C.S. Mott Chair of Sustainable Agriculture, Michigan State University

**Brian Holdwick**, vice president, Detroit Economic Growth Corp.

**Kwame Kenyatta**, member, Detroit City Council

**Derrick Miller**, founder and managing partner, Citivest Capital Partners L.L.C.

**Donald Ridley**, owner, Apple Grove Orchards

**Eric Smith**, partner, Frank Smith & Sons

**Laura Trudeau**, senior program officer, The Kresge Foundation

Carmody worked to turn around downtown Rock Island with a combination of mixed-use commercial and affordable-housing projects.

"I think it was certainly a daunting challenge," he said. "There wasn't a road map."

What he helped develop was a dining and entertainment district he now describes as a "regional weekend magnet." The downtown also includes about 200 lofts, which he said contributed to sustaining the area since it experienced its biggest growth in the mid-1990s.

Rock Island Mayor Mark Schwiebert said Carmody was instrumental in heading a "dynamic and innovative partnership" between the growth corporation and city government that helped the area's progress.

"He's very cutting-edge in terms of seeing what's happening and spotting trends, particularly in urban America," Schwiebert said.

In Fort Wayne, Carmody said, the Downtown Improvement District was a former special-assessment district that had gone dormant. He built the authority's staff from scratch and increased its budget from \$300,000 in his first year to \$600,000 in the second.

He was also part of a team in Fort Wayne that created plans for Harrison Square, a \$125 million mixed-use project slated to begin construction next month. Carmody admitted he's disappointed he won't be able to see Harrison Square come to fruition before coming to Detroit.

"It was hard to walk away from that excitement, but I just completely fell in love with the Eastern Market neighborhood," Carmody said.

Kate Beebe, outgoing president and CEO of Eastern Market Corp., said the nonprofit chose Carmody because of his civic experience and because he has an entrepreneurial background the board thinks will help him relate to Eastern Market merchants.

Carmody and his brother owned six restaurants in the Rock Island area. The first of Carmody's res-taurants opened in 1979, and he and his brother sold their interests in them by the late 1990s.

"It served me well in the downtown and economic development business," Carmody said of his restaurant experience.

Beebe said Carmody also has advised other cities about downtown revitalization, including Pittsburgh and Little Rock, Ark.

Beebe, who owns the Detroit-based real estate consulting company **Katherine Beebe & Associates**, took the helm of the Eastern Market Corp. on an interim basis when the nonprofit was formed last summer. The city turned over management of the area to the corporation in August 2006.

The market is governed by a 21-member board (*see box, this page*).

Beebe said the board has been able to collaborate and achieve a number of goals since being established.

Eastern Market Corp. has nearly completed the first phase of a \$12.8 million streetscape project and renovation of three sheds in the market. The nonprofit has raised \$10.2 million of the needed funds, Beebe said.

The market attracted about 39,000 visitors each Saturday this year and about 150,000 visitors during the market's Flower Day in May, Beebe said.

Numbers weren't tracked in previous years, so it's not known whether attendance is up or down. But Beebe said the initiatives put in place so far are generating positive feedback.

Carmody said his first order of business at Eastern Market will be to meet the stakeholders.

"You can have all the great strategies in the world, but it's a relationship business," he said. "The sooner I get to know people, the sooner we can define where the opportunities are."

Although Carmody thinks Eastern Market is moving in the right direction, he hopes he can introduce new ideas.

"I think those communities that really flourish are those that are always figuring out new angles and new ways to do things," Carmody said.

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