

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact**: Justin Schott, Executive Director, EcoWorks

**Phone:** (313) 459-8987

**Email:** jschott@ecoworksdetroit.org

**EcoWorks’ Breakfast to Showcase Detroit’s New Sustainability Office**

Detroit, Mich. – September 13, 2017 – EcoWorks, a Detroit non-profit and leader in local and regional sustainability initiatives, will host its 9th Annual Breakfast at the Charles H. Wright Museum on Friday, September 15th from 7:30-10:00am. More than 155 professionals from the energy industry, businesses, government, non-profits, financial firms, and grassroots community organizations are registered to attend.

The event will showcase the recent creation of the City of Detroit’s Office of Sustainability. Joel Howrani-Heeres, recently appointed as the first director of the Office, will provide the keynote address. The Office is a major milestone in Detroit’s journey “to strengthen the economic, social and environmental well-being of the city's residents, neighborhoods and businesses."

Howrani-Heeres started working with the city in 2015, serving as Director of Open Data and Analysis for the Department of Innovation and Technology. Prior to that he worked for DTE Energy Co., served as Managing Director for the Southeast Michigan Regional Energy Office and as Sustainable Communities Coordinator at EcoWorks.

Past speakers have included former Governor Jennifer Granholm, former Mayor of Pittsburgh Thom Murphy, and last year’s keynote, Winona LaDuke, a renowned Native American activist and former vice presidential candidate for the Green Party in 2000.

The theme of this year’s event, “Sustainability: A platform for….” is intentionally open-ended and invites attendees to contribute ideas, aspirations and questions for the new Office of Sustainability. The conversation will tie together a range of themes, from the unprecedented impacts of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, climate change impacts around the globe, the events of Charlottesville and the 50th anniversary of the Detroit’s ‘67 Uprising.

Justin Schott, Executive Director of EcoWorks, explains that a goal of the breakfast is to encourage more holistic thinking and dialogue around sustainability and social justice: “Our climates – both racial and geophysical – will become increasingly perilous if we do not change course. We cannot keep thinking of these storms in isolation; they are inextricably connected, just as Detroit and its suburbs are one intertwined region with a shared future.”

Honored at the event will be the 2017 Sustainable Community Champions. These awards celebrate individuals and organizations who have shown leadership in sustainable practices in Southeast Michigan communities. This year’s awardees are:

* Cass Community Social Services
* Danielle Conroyd - Executive Director, River Raisin Institute
* Maria Thomas - leader with PowerUP and Soulardarity
* Sandra Turner-Handy - co-leader, Denby Neighborhood Alliance and Community Engagement Director, Michigan Environmental Council

The breakfast is sponsored by MASCO Corporation Foundation, O’Brien Construction Company, CLEAResult, VTC Insurance Group, Advance Plumbing & Heating, Benkari Facilities Management, Glen Olivache, CPA, P.C., Mannik Smith Group, MSHDA, Henry Ford Health System, O’Connor Real Estate, Plunkett & Cooney, Walker-Miller Energy Services, Wheel House Detroit, WDET 101.9 FM, and GreeningDetroit.com.

More information about the event can be found on the EcoWorks website: [www.ecoworksdetroit.org/annualbreakfast](http://www.ecoworksdetroit.org/annualbreakfast)

###

Established in 1981, EcoWorks has been at the forefront of sustainable development in Michigan for 36 years. The organization has served more than 60,000 residents and 50 municipalities, generating lifetime energy savings of more than $30 million. Its mission is to create opportunities to learn and practice the sustainable use of energy and natural resources through innovative education, job training, consulting, social business, and advocacy.