

**OPINION** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## Doe, Sova: Everyone can participate in Michigan's population growth

**Hilary Doe and Aidan Sova** The Detroit News

Published 8:01 p.m. ET Nov. 26, 2024 | Updated 9:09 a.m. ET Nov. 27, 2024

Michiganians don't choose Michigan once. They choose the place they'll call home year after year. And they don't just move to states; they move to places and communities they love.

Our goal is to help Michigan communities kickstart growth by designing innovative, localized approaches to fill talent gaps.

Beyond filling talent gaps, a growing population creates vibrant communities, increases diverse culture and entertainment options, builds a greater sense of connection, and is critical to local employers, economies and maintaining investment in important local priorities. These factors make Michigan a more attractive place to live, work and build a life.

Last year, we traveled across the state and listened to feedback from more than 10,000 residents, prioritizing coalition-building, active listening sessions, and thoughtful representation, especially of younger generations.

We quickly learned that what works to support growth in Detroit won't necessarily work in Grand Rapids or Marquette. Each region has unique challenges and goals, and each community's strengths deserve to be celebrated.

Equipped with that knowledge, we launched Make MI Home, a first-of-its-kind growth effort that empowers our diverse communities to create their own talent retention or attraction programs. We asked local experts to collaboratively develop creative, locally-tailored ideas. They delivered.

In October, the Growth Office awarded \$661,250 to five recipients in the first round of Make MI Home. For instance, TechTown Detroit's program will provide emerging entrepreneurs

from Wayne State University with co-working space, mentoring and housing support while they build their business. The selected programs are a testament to the creativity and resilience of Michigan residents and gave young people, especially, the opportunity once again to help drive our growth strategy.

By empowering communities, Make MI Home ensures proposed community growth strategies or improvements are locally driven and reflect the area's unique wants and needs. Historically, underrepresented areas, marginalized groups, low-income families and the voices of young people have too often been overlooked in decision-making. As noted by the Growing Michigan Together Council, a top-down, one-size-fits-all growth strategy doesn't serve Michigan's diverse population. Our first-of-its-kind program can.

Looking ahead, we're excited to announce that a second round of Make MI Home will launch next year, offering even more communities the chance to bring their ideas to life.

A growing Michigan means a thriving Michigan, with more opportunities and brighter futures for all. To get there, young people will not just be the beneficiaries of a growing state, but also its architects. We need everyone on Team Michigan, recognizing the importance of our state's population growth and actively participating in shaping our future. Together we can build a more vibrant, prosperous and welcoming state for ourselves and generations to come.

*Hilary Doe serves as Michigan's chief growth officer. Aidan Sova is as a trustee and treasurer at Ann Arbor District Library.*