

## DC Public Banking Center, Washington DC

by Ruth Caplan

The campaign for a public bank in the nation's capitol began inauspiciously in August 2011 at the first Democracy Convention in Madison, Wisconsin when two women agreed to return to DC and convene a meeting on public banking. It then got a jump start when DC Mayor Gray announced he wanted DC to become the leader of sustainability in the country. Working groups were created with open participation, including one on green economics.

Lo and behold, a public bank emerged as one of two top recommendations and went on to be enthusiastically received when all the working groups convened. Mayor Gray created a Green Ribbon Advisory Committee and included a study for a public bank as one of his recommendations for Sustainable DC. Now there was an auspicious beginning.

Don't be fooled. No one ever said taking on Wall Street would be easy. The informal public bank working group, which had been meeting to develop a campaign, rebranded itself as the DC Public Banking Center and delved into creating a strategy to win. This included identifying likely allies, likely blockers, and those who might be swayed.

Local banks and other local financial institutions were identified as key allies and perhaps the biggest challenge. Meetings were held early on with as many banks as possible to lay out how a DC public partnership bank would benefit them. This continues to be an essential component of the campaign, easily overlooked as other constituencies are pursued.

Organizing tools have been put in place: a clear mission statement; a strong, diverse Advisory Committee; a power point presentation; a website; fact sheets; a petition. With these tools, the campaign is reaching out to key constituencies including the religious community; labor; small businesses; local economic development advocates; environmentalists; and economic/social justice organizations.

The need for a feasibility study was identified early on with a list of essential elements, but the funding hurdle has not yet been surmounted. The University of Vermont Gund study has been a real inspiration to this effort.

The DC strategy differs from many other campaigns in that introducing legislation is seen as one of the last steps. The bill needs to reflect concerns of various constituencies, which are key to passing the bill, as well as practical considerations from the CFO's office. And given how much political muscle Wall Street can throw at defeating any idea that threatens their hegemony, it is essential to build a broad and deep movement before introducing a bill.

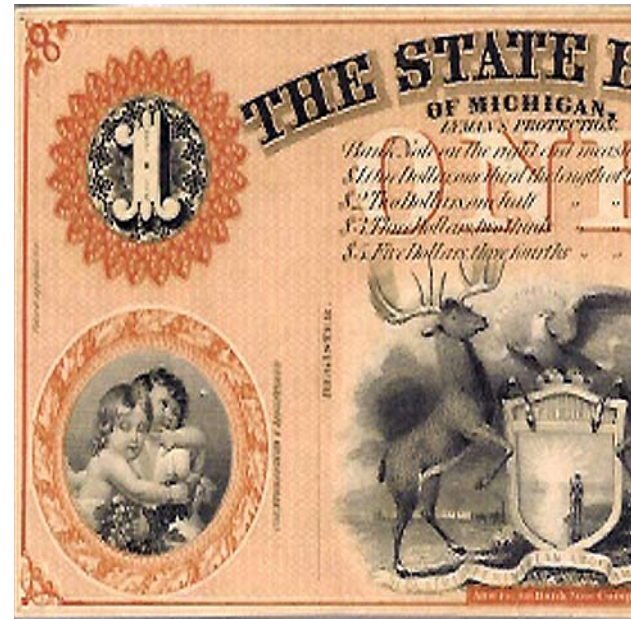
Finally the DC campaign has a unique challenge. Not only has DC been denied a vote in Congress, any bill passed by the City Council can be vetoed by Congress. For more information see [www.dcpublicbanking.org](http://www.dcpublicbanking.org)



graphic: Sustainable.DC

## Public Bank Campaigns Across

Ever since the financial melt-down in 2009, there has been a surge of interest across the country in public banking as a positive alternative to the derivatives-fueled global gambling casino. The personal suffering families experienced from the loss of their homes, after sub-prime mortgages



## State Bank: The Solution for

by Dan Osterman

When it comes to the economy, government does have a necessary and proper role to protect a functioning free market and the rights of individuals to pursue their economic interests, maintenance of public infrastructure, and the undisturbed flow of commerce across borders. Essential to these functions is to support a banking system that seeks to serve the community, act as an incubator for businesses, and to protect the system from those who attempt to abuse it.

The actions of the Federal Reserve System, in concert with Wall Street bankers, has failed in its stated purpose, while repeatedly stealing the wealth of Americans; which has been felt no greater than in Michigan and in particular, Detroit.

If the Michigan legislature is serious about "reinventing" the state and reviving Detroit, their first priority should be a healthy and expanding community banking system, which can only be achieved by the