



Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission

Request for Quote

Public Relations

Proposed by:



February 1, 2024

*Mario Morrow & Associates + Activate Detroit
Request for Quote: Public Relations*

- 1. Share their years of experience and summarize their campaigns in targeting the various demographics aged 18 or older (including the city’s seven neighborhood districts) in the City of Detroit. In addition, please identify the campaign measurements of success and whether they were met, and the lessons learned.**

Mario Morrow & Associates (MMA) and Activate Detroit (AD) are teaming up to bring over 100 years of collective experience leading innovative teams in creating powerful, results-oriented communications to the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC). Mario Morrow & Associates will serve as the lead agency on this project. We are a diverse group with skillsets ranging from politics to community outreach to full-service public relations. Together, our team brings a 360-degree cache of knowledge of the landscape of the City of Detroit, its stakeholders and key audiences paired with a proven track record of developing dynamic communications and outreach campaigns that are impactful and effectuate positive change. With a collective background and expertise in combining strategic messaging and communications with grassroots community engagement, our team is uniquely qualified to help the MICRC effectively reach out to Detroit residents to provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard as the maps for the Michigan House of Representatives are reconfigured.

Our team will collaborate with MICRC to develop a plan to supplement current outreach efforts by identifying new opportunities for positive, sustainable partnerships with groups ranging from civic and grass roots organizations and government officials to local influencers and the media to educate residents about redistricting. Our combined past successes with similar projects and knowledge of diverse groups of key influencers who are critical to spreading the word about critical topics to Detroiters is unparalleled. Our team’s collective knowledge of the Detroit political landscape, disparate views and common denominators — will allow us to bridge divides, reach residents for meaningful engagement in providing feedback for the proposed maps for the Michigan House of Representatives.

Mario Morrow & Associates and Activate Detroit each have a solid foundation and a long history of success. Each team member is mentored by senior professionals who lead and take accountability for the quality and success of all projects to ensure the most substantial impact and return on investment are achieved. In consideration of emergent needs or requirements, both businesses have established relationships with experienced professionals within the field who are immediately available if needed.

About Mario Morrow & Associates

Mario Morrow & Associates, LLC (MMA) is a Southfield-based communications firm specializing in public relations, community outreach and event planning. MMA’s team has been providing comprehensive communications and public relations services in Detroit and across Michigan for 37 years, since its founding in 1986. Mario Morrow & Associates is the “go-to” firm for relationship- and image-building as well as crisis management. Its success is evidenced by a renowned history of achieving measurable results through collaborative coalition-building and working with both Democrats and Republicans.

Expanding on its origins in political consulting and campaign management, MMA has strong relationships with key stakeholders that help clients influence change while enhancing their reputation and furthering their business objectives.

MMA boasts a roster of private and public sector clients in categories, including transportation, government, public health, banking, education, cultural institutions and more across Michigan. Among them are the Detroit Institute of Arts, Regional Transit Authority and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel.

MMA has been providing crisis management services to governmental agencies such as the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and its COVID-19 mitigation and vaccination campaign and the response to the Benton Harbor Water Crisis.

MMA is known for its ability to develop strong and effective paid and earned media relations campaigns. We develop tailored communications plans for each client that not only are aimed at improving our clients' public image, but also telling their story, setting the record straight and getting out the facts.

MMA's holistic approach to planning, developing and implementing community outreach initiatives will directly connect MICRC with audiences across Detroit to raise awareness and knowledge, elicit engagement in the redistricting process.

About Activate Detroit

Deeply rooted in Detroit's culture, communities and business landscape, Activate Detroit partners with organizations to promote the city's advancement and prosperity. Experts at navigating a range of initiatives, including economic development, land use and planning and government relations and access, Activate Detroit is committed to achieving results that holistically support Detroit's people, businesses and future.

Combining a unique understanding of the city and its residents with vast, strategic connections and decades of experience, Activate Detroit has operated out of Detroit, MI for over 13 years – including doing business as Thomas Group Consulting. Working closely with clients, its knowledgeable team drives advocacy, outreach, planning and development with expert recommendations and an ability to deftly maneuver Detroit's business and public landscapes.

With a foundation in business, government, education and health care, Activate Detroit's commitment to the city's success is demonstrated through versatile initiatives that include:

- Navigating bureaucratic processes and building community support for MHT Housing Inc. to mitigate delays that were impeding the construction of critically important affordable housing developments.
- Forging meaningful connections between O'Hair Park, an established Detroit community and a real estate development corporation to guide and manage the process of constructing a Michigan Department of Health and Human Services facility by effectively conveying the project's mutual benefits and building a sustainable relationship between the two entities.

- Leveraging positive political relationships to improve safety and access for Detroit Votes, which aided local governments and election officials in meeting the needs of area voters to ensure their ability to be heard in the 2020 election.

Activate Detroit’s incomparable understanding of the communities and neighborhoods across Detroit, ability to leverage existing relationships and connect with Detroiters will be a critical asset to MICRC’s public relations and community outreach and engagement initiatives.

Case Studies

Client: The District Detroit

Mario Morrow & Associates (MMA) and Activate Detroit (AD) collaborated to develop a proactive outreach and media strategy designed to help The District Detroit (TDD) generate support in the community and through the media in advance of several key votes at the local and state levels. Approval from the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC), the Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (DBRA), the Detroit City Council and the Michigan Strategic Fund were necessary for the project to receive the green light to proceed.



Activate Detroit was retained in November 2022, and charged with garnering support from residents, neighborhood organizations, faith-based leaders, labor, the business community, NAC members, DBRA, City Council, and the Michigan Strategic Fund.

Over the course of the project, AD successfully:

- Nurtured relationships with TDD’s allies, and encouraged them to write support letters, share their support during public comment in both virtual and in-person meetings.
- Facilitated tours of TDD, held community meetings with residents to inform and counter negative perceptions that existed related to the building of Little Caesar’s Arena and broken promises.
- Coordinated meetings between a major labor union and TDD regarding opportunities on future developments which resulted in their support for TDD.

With key votes scheduled for the first quarter of 2023, the MMA team was retained in late January to develop a proactive media strategy that was to work in tandem with the outreach work being completed by AD. After more than a year of only playing defense and responding to media inquires, it was time for TDD to seek out some proactive earned media opportunities to set the record straight, dispel misconceptions and tell its story.

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After more than a year of only playing defense and responding to media inquiries, it was time for TDD to seek out some proactive earned media opportunities to set the record straight, dispelling misconceptions, and tell its story.

MMA developed a two-phased media strategy focused on securing media interviews for critical members of the Related and ODM leadership (phase 1) and high-level surrogates (phase 2). This plan targeted essential mainstream and Black radio outlets, editorial board meetings with newspapers, and television and podcast interviews.

Between February and April 2023, MMA secured interviews with the following outlets:

- Paul W. Smith (WJR)
- The Guy Gordon Show (WJR)
- WWJ Newsbreak
- The Wade McCree Show (910 AM)
- The Mark S Lee Show (910 AM)
- The Lavonia Perryman Show (910 AM)
- On the Line with Rev. Horace Sheffield (910 AM)
- The Robert Ficano Show (910 AM)
- The Anthony Adams Show (910 AM)
- The Mildred Gaddis Show (KISS 105.9)
- Real Talk Weekly (WADL)
- Flashpoint (WDIV)
- CBS Detroit
- Detroit Free Press
- Michigan Chronicle
- Crain's Detroit Business
- The Arab American News
- Daily Detroit Podcast
- Detroit Today Podcast with Stephen Henderson (WDET)

Client: Center for Secure And Modern Elections

Project: Detroit Votes

Clients trust Activate Detroit with nonpartisan election projects that strengthen democracy.

In 2018, voters endorsed a ballot initiative to amend the Michigan Constitution to establish the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. The goal is to make sure Michigan’s Congressional, state Senate, and state House district lines are drawn fairly in a citizen-led, transparent process.



During the redistricting process, Activate Detroit was brought in to facilitate the organizing work of roughly 20 organizations. We ensured a collaborative process that adhered to the rules of the Constitutional amendment.

Activate Detroit also worked to educate the commission on what a ‘community of interest’ is and how to create a voice for the people. Strategically aligning districts for marginalized groups gives them, and the organizations that represent them, a better opportunity to be heard in an election.

For example, organizations representing the LGBTQ+ community have historically been divided across many districts. After Activate Detroit’s involvement, those organizations in Detroit created a voice for themselves and are now in the same district for the first time. The same is true for the Latino and Arab American communities — and the unified districts led to the election of more people from those communities.

When organizations and coalitions need expert guidance on nonpartisan election initiatives, more and more of them are turning to Activate Detroit. Based on the results of a number of recent projects, their confidence is well-placed.

Client: The Detroit Institute of Arts

Mario Morrow & Associates coordinates communications and media outreach to highlight the museum’s work and programming in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. Our responsibilities include but are not limited to crisis communications and designing, developing, and executing communications and media strategy that results in coverage in key strategic media outlets across the region. While we



work closely with the mainstream media, a lot of our work centers on coordinating coverage in ethnic and community-focused outlets.

MMA also provides continuing evaluation of current communications activities of the DIA and feedback to staff to assist in adjusting the overall communications strategy.

Client: The State of Michigan

Project: CENSUS 2020

The state of Michigan commissioned MMA (and one partner) to develop and execute a comprehensive communications plan that required ambitious timelines for marketing recommendations, the development of hundreds of campaign assets and statewide implementation that was localized to each unique geographic areas, including Wayne County.



Our team developed a broad campaign theme and message to launch Michigan’s census efforts and follow with highly focused messages and tactics to reach narrowly targeted audience groups. We identified, defined and created a deep collective understanding of eight key hard-to-count segments — among them such groups as college students, urban residents, immigrants and African, Hispanic and Arabic residents — which included extensive analysis of media vehicles and media consumption habits. A statewide campaign, our area of focus included the primary Southeast Michigan counties of Oakland, Wayne and Macomb.

In Wayne County, we partnered with Dearborn Mayor John B. O’Reilly Jr. and then-Wayne County Director of External Affairs Daniel Baxter to announce a livestreaming event that highlighted the convenience of completing the census and the important benefits it brings to local communities.

We achieved exceptional and noteworthy results for Michigan’s 2020 census effort.

- Michigan’s participation rate was 71.3% — eighth highest in the country for self-responses.
- Michigan was the first state in the country to surpass 2010 participation.
- The news release announcing Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s “Take a Break and Be Counted” video was featured nationally on CNN’s Census Day coverage.
- Earned media placements across Michigan exceeded 220 articles for a total estimated media value of \$2 million and an estimated reach of 131 million impressions, gaining consistent and widespread coverage in every media market in the state.

Client: The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Project: COVID-19 Outreach



When the world shut down in March of 2020, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) turned to long-time partner, Brogan & Partners, to lead the advertising effort. Mario Morrow and Associates and was recruited to help spread the message of the importance of testing and vaccination in urban communities across Michigan.

After the initial excitement of the vaccine, interest tapered off to a pace that threatened to prevent the state from reaching herd immunity. The pandemic had become deeply politicized and as a result, trust was elusive. To hasten consideration, community partners and market research suggested presenting personal stories told by real physicians and neighbors—the few sources vaccine-hesitant people trusted. We abandoned scripts and storyboards and hit the streets, asking residents why they chose to get vaccinated. We heard hundreds of stories from people who lost loved ones to COVID, those who missed seeing friends and family, and those who just wanted to get back to living a normal life. We could all relate. We also talked with physicians on the front lines. They helped us confront worries and myths without filters or editorialization.

As the vaccine rollout continued, we conducted research to gauge attitudes toward vaccination. In November of 2020 just prior to the launch of the vaccine, only 50% of African Americans said they were very likely or somewhat likely to get the vaccine. By March, this percentage increased to 70% and by August, 79% of African Americans said they were very likely or somewhat likely to get the vaccine. We relied heavily on our relationships with the faith-based community and community and ethnic media to drive this penetrate reluctant communities and drive this important message home.

Project: Benton Harbor water bottle and water filter distribution, and recycling programs

In the Fall of 2021, the drinking water in Benton Harbor was found to be contaminated with lead, unhealthy, and unsafe for; drinking, bathing, brushing teeth, cooking, making baby formula and mixing medications. State officials and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services instructed all residents connected to the city water line to stop using the water.

It was determined that weekly allotments of bottled water – for each person in every residence – water filters would be made available at public locations like Benton Harbor High School, local churches and more. This arrangement created the need for a distribution program to deliver bottled water, and water filters to residents who were homebound and unable to make it to one of the designated water pick-up locations.

Since the inception of the project, MMA has served as project manager for the Bottled Water Distribution, Water Bottle Recycling and Water Filter Distribution and Educational Outreach Programs. Acting as government liaisons, we partnered with the faith-based community to serve as subcontractors and hire Benton Harbor area residents to handle the distribution of water and water filters and recycling in the designated areas outlined by the state.

MMA vetted each subcontractor aka “field teams” prior to entering the partnership. Field team organizations are responsible for the hiring and daily management of employees for their teams; adhering to guidelines set forth by MMA. In total, there are seven (7) field teams, employing approximately 77 Benton Harbor-area residents. These programs are scheduled to continue until December 31, 2023.

2. Identify and provide their experience in working with traditional and nontraditional media personalities and influencers who could assist to educate, explain, and engage residents to provide feedback for the reconfiguration of the Michigan House of Representatives in Districts #1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14.

For the last five years, our team has worked with traditional and nontraditional surrogates and influencers for public relations and outreach campaigns to help drive messaging and penetrate hard to reach communities. This has been an extremely beneficial tool that has taken our campaigns to the next level.

Surrogates are defined as supporters – subject matter experts or community members – who will speak positively about your initiative publicly. We have used surrogates for campaigns with the following clients:

- The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan
 - We assisted with getting out the messaging for their millage ballot initiative by making sure that radio influencers were equipped with accurate information to share with their listeners about the millage. We also hosted their virtual town hall meetings in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties, including coordinating the participation of influencers in the panels who carried our messages.
- The District Detroit
 - Worked with surrogates to coordinate participation at City Council and other community meetings in support of the District Detroit development
- Census 2020
 - Worked with influencers and surrogates to create content highlighting the importance of completing the 2020 Census
- Wayne County (COVID-19)
 - Worked with surrogates and influencers to create content and led conversations providing the latest information about the COVID-19, the importance of masking up and testing, as well as updates on vaccines

- The State of Michigan (COVID-19)
 - Worked with surrogates and influencers to create content and led conversations providing the latest information about the COVID-19, the importance of masking up and testing, as well as updates on vaccines
- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (Breast and Cervical Cancer Awareness)
 - We worked with surrogates (three first ladies from churches across Metro Detroit) who did interviews on urban radio to highlight Cervical Cancer Awareness month and the importance of women getting screened.
- Wayne County Community College District
 - We assisted with getting out the messaging for their millage ballot initiative by making sure that radio influencers were equipped with accurate information to share with their listeners about the millage.
- The Whitmer Gilchrist Campaign
 - We equipped radio and social media influencers with messaging and key information that they would share on air and in creative videos and other posts for social media.
- Detroiters for Change – Insurance Reform
 - We coordinated radio interviews for influencers to discuss the high insurance rates, and we also had surrogates do radio interviews, attend block club meetings, community outreach meetings and meetings with legislators to tell how the high insurance rates were negatively impacting their finances.

Influencers are paid supporters who will promote your initiative on their platform, which might be social media, the radio or among their following/ membership base. We have worked with influencers from a wide-range of backgrounds, including:

- Media personalities
- The Faith-based community
- Non-profit organizations
- Social media influencers
- Community Organizations
 - NAACP
 - National Action Network
 - Urban League of Detroit and S.E. Michigan

3. How it will develop and execute a multimedia public relations plan to increase engagement from the City of Detroit residents that addresses the scope of work. This should include a targeted social media plan.

Our team will develop and implement a multi-phased public relations plan that combines grass roots outreach along with paid and social media designed to increase participation in the remapping process for the Michigan House of Representatives in Districts 1,7,8,10,11 and 12.

We will employ our experience and vast arsenal of connections and relationships that have delivered favorable results for increasing engagement in critical civic processes in the past.

Grass roots outreach

Community engagement is at the heart of everything we do. We believe the success of Detroit — and the organizations that establish a presence here — requires the input of community members and public decision-makers. We give everyone a voice because both organizations and individuals are the pulse of Detroit.

Leveraging the existing Michigan Mapping portal, make updates to reflect the State House draft maps and create a concise comparative toolkit to facilitate the following community presentations:

Work with leadership of the below organizations to hold map review sessions with their membership networks in person and/or virtually:

- NAACP Detroit - Kamila Landrum
- Detroit Alumnae Chapters of National Panhellenic Council
- LGBT Detroit - Jerron Totten
- Detroit Change Initiative - Norman Clement
- LWV Detroit - Deborah Bunkley
- United Way of Southeastern Michigan - Jeff Miles
- Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation - Angela Reyes
- Mothering Justice - Danielle Atkinson
- APIA-Vote Michigan - Rebeka Islam

Local political influencers and existing convening spaces:

- Neighborhood Associations board members within State House Districts 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14
- District Managers within State House Districts 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14
- District councilmember coffee hours between February 5-22
- Recreation Centers online platforms and physical locations with a focus on winter programming (hockey, etc.)
- Detroit at Work online platforms and physical locations

Business & Social Convening Spaces:

- Downtown Detroit Partnership
- Detroit Regional Chamber
- Local Business Valentine's Day events

Paid Media

Paid media is how you reach the greatest number of people with your messages. Mario Morrow & Associates will serve as agency of record responsible for making all media buys in print, radio, television.

It is our recommendation that you devote \$242,000 to a paid media campaign, which will run for the duration of the campaign. We recommend MICRC buy media time in on cable TV, local TV, urban radio and in community and ethnic newspapers. We recommend advertising on the following platforms:

Cable TV - \$60,000

- Comcast (Detroit)

Purchasing time on comcast will allow us to reach the most viewers.

Urban Radio - \$70,000

- iHeart Media
 - oWJLB 97.9
 - oMIX 92.3
- WGPR 107.5
- Beasley Media
 - KISS 105.9

All broadcast ads will be 30 seconds in length.

Community and ethnic newspapers (Print and Digital) – \$40,000

- Michigan Chronicle

Billboards - \$50,000

Estimated production Cost - \$22,300

Please note that script writing and media buys may result in additional fees. All additional fees will be discussed and must be approved prior to work being performed.

Social Media

It's not enough to rely only on grass roots outreach and paid media to connect with Detroiters. Many Detroiters rely on social media to get their news and information. We will develop a robust social media plan with engaging content is critical. We will develop a social media plan that includes content creation, posting/ sharing, comment monitoring and an end of campaign report.

Each social media channel has its own audience demographics and advantages/disadvantages. Our teams have been on the cutting edge of social media since the platforms were first developed and we will ensure the MICRC leverages each of them to increase engagement in this process.

Surrogate and influencer program

We will secure and sub-contract with 12-15 influencers/surrogates as a part of this plan. Our team will negotiate fair and appropriate fees for their services. This will cost \$131,000 (\$120,500 for influencers and \$10,500 for surrogates) and must be paid up front; separate from the monthly retainer.

4. Identify the principal and their resume for the project.

Mario Morrow of Mario Morrow & Associates and Buzz Thomas and Terence Thomas of Activate Detroit will serve as principals for the project.

Resumes attached

5. Share three references and their contact information that can attest to your experience relevant to this request for quote.

Reference: Michael McLauchlan, Vice President of Government Relations for Ilitch Companies
Project: District Detroit
Contact information: mike.mclauchlan@ilitchholdings.com, 313-471-6082

Reference: Kerry Ebersole Singh, Chief Talent Solutions & Engagement Officer, Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Project: Protect Michigan Commission (COVID-19)
Contact information: ebersolek3@michigan.org, 517-488-9029

Reference: Marc Solomon, Civitas Public Affairs
Project: Center for Secure and Modern Elections // Detroit Votes
Contact information: msolomon@civitaspublicaffairs.com, 323-590-1510

6. Resume and hourly for everyone (writer, graphic designer, strategist, videographer, project manager, etc.) working on the project.

Hourly Rates

Mario Morrow - \$325/hour	Shauna Morrow - \$200/hour
Buzz Thomas - \$325/hour	George Etheridge - \$200/hour
Terence Thomas - \$325/hour	Mario Morrow, Jr - \$200/hour
Ryan Bridges - \$250/hour	Social Media Manager - \$100/hour
Clarence Gayles - \$250/hour	Videographer - \$100/hour
Clare Allenson - \$250/hour	Admin - \$75/hour

Resumes attached

7. Provide an estimated budget based on the staff hours working on this project and that identifies the promotional costs (radio, print, television, social media, influencers, etc.) associated with this project that will be paid by the Commission. The Commission understands that these are estimates and subject to change

Estimated project budget:

Team member	Estimated Hours During Campaign	Hourly Rate	Estimated Cost
Mario Morrow, Sr.	80	\$325	\$28,000
Buzz Thomas	80	\$325	\$28,000
Terence Thomas	80	\$325	\$28,000
Ryan Bridges	80	\$250	\$20,000
Clarence Gayles	80	\$250	\$20,000
Clare Allenson	80	\$250	\$20,000
Shauna Morrow	60	\$200	\$12,000
George Etheridge	60	\$200	\$12,000
Mario Morrow, Jr	60	\$200	\$12,000
Social Media Mgr	40	\$100	\$4,000
Videographer	30	\$100	\$3,000
Admin	20	\$75	\$1,500
Total			\$188,500
Influencer program			\$120,500
Surrogates (paid)			\$10,500
TV ads			\$60,000
Radio ads			\$70,000
Print ads			\$40,000
Billboards			\$50,000
Boosted social media posts			\$11,500
Production costs			\$22,300
Totals		-	\$573,300