

Soulardarity 2017 Year End Summary



When I decided to join the fight for alternative energy in Highland Park, MI it was from the personal experience of dealing with gas and electric options that were not affordable, witnessing an accountability process that was not accessible to myself or others like me and to advocate for those who may not have understood the power their voice and involvement has in changing environmental decisions and outcomes in favor of those who are continuously impacted in negative and harmful ways.

This email is to serve as a review of our accomplishments and achievements of our organization and may also be shared with our supporters, partners and the community at-large.

Soulardarity believes in energy democracy, the concept that people impacted by energy decisions should have a seat at the table in making them. Unfortunately, the history of energy decisions in Michigan epitomizes the well-known saying in our communities: if you aren't at the table, you're on the menu.

In communities across the United States, people are seeking alternatives to conventional energy sources. Advances in solar technology, an increase in federal and state tax incentives, and creative new financing models have made solar projects including community solar projects, more financially feasible in Highland Park and surrounding communities like Detroit and Hamtramck. Highland Park is a city of innovation. Home of the first automated assembly line, the first mile of paved road, the first urban freeway, and the invention of the electric streetlight., Highland Park is a city that has shaped the world.



The best way to show appreciation or support for this work is to commit to its continuation and progress. A fellow organizer once said, ***"You don't need to be an endowed foundation to invest in an idea."*** As we share these achievements please understand that we are also in the process of growing our small but huge hearted organization.

Become a Solarsational Supporter!



Our end of the year push is to gain fiduciary support to cover leasing costs for our new office space for 2018. Our monthly rent is \$250 per month and with your help we want to use your funds to alleviate this cost so that we may focus on the bigger picture tasks and organizing tasks.

Go to our donate page! <https://soulardarity.nationbuilder.com/donate>

Donations that cover an entire month of rent will be featured on our Facebook page (with your permission of course). In-kind donations and volunteer hours are also welcome as helpful donations. Give or not we hope you still join us at our **Annual Holiday Party** on **Sunday, December 17th at 4pm**. There will be food, drinks, entertainment, and great raffle prizes! RSVP here: soulardarity.com/events

"We are experiencing trying, troubling times. But in our cities and municipalities, the promise of forward-thinking, tolerant and inclusive democratic values still stands strong." (Medium Article: Our Nation's Cities: Working Together to Provide a Better Alternative)

Forward ever!

Shimekia Nichols

Staff Organizer & Proud Soulardarity Member

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Building a brighter future for Highland Park and neighboring cities with energy democracy education, organizing and people-powered energy

Here is a look at some of what we have accomplished in 2017:

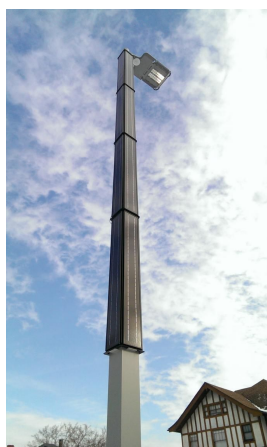
The following programs, events and collaborations were successful because we executed community input, maintained transparency and evaluated each step looking for ways they have been improved, which accounts for the awards and accomplishments listed below. We believe in keeping business local, so the majority of our initiatives involve our working with a Michigan manufacturer, Solartonic, and Detroit-based Ryter Cooperative Industries on the build and installation of our solar-powered lights.



Power UP! Bulk Purchase Program <http://www.soulardarity.com/powerup>

We helped develop individual and community resilience and purchase power by coordinating a cooperative economic solar buying program. This was a major step forward in lighting the way for residents looking for high quality solar solutions such as home security lighting, phone chargers at affordable prices.

- In 2017, we were able to expand our program to include lighting options and offering solar solutions for other home and personal needs.
- 50 lights, solar generators, and solar phone chargers installed this year.
- This fall we hosted a Celebration Dinner for participants and received more than 40 RSVPs and response to our feedback survey.



Parker Village Shines <https://www.ioby.org/project/pvshines>

A successful campaign which raised \$11,535 on IOBY! Parker Village and Soulardarity came together to bring a state-of-the-art smart solar street light with wifi, LED signage, and on-site security to Highland Park. A small step in a big movement to reclaim the innovative legacy of a great city.

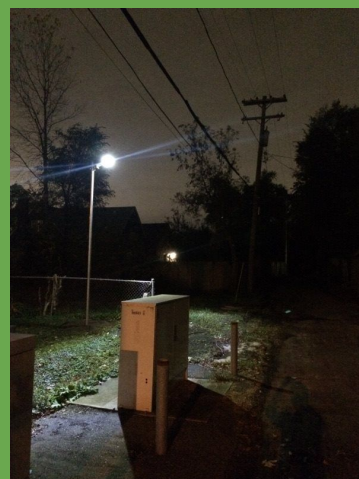
- Parker Village is a platform for Highland Park innovators like founder Juan Shannon, a long-time Highland Park resident and owner of Modern Tribe Communications, Inc. who bought the old Thompson Elementary School on the eastside of HP to start Parker Village, to be empowered, resourced, and networked into a powerful movement for Highland Park's revitalization.
- Installation is slated for April 2018
- The success of this campaign drives Parker Village forward as a model of community investment and innovation for a brighter future in Highland Park.



Fitzgerald Creative Alley Revitalization Project

Adding solar-powered pole-mounted alley lights in the Fitzgerald Neighborhood of Detroit made the alleyway safer and more beautiful while providing clean energy that is accessible and affordable for everyone. This effort was coordinated in large part by Detroit Collaborative Design Center at the University of Detroit Mercy.

- This year 2 lights were installed by RCI at no cost to the residents (with the goal of 100 being installed in 2018!)
- These solar-powered streetlights are exactly the kind of clean energy innovations pushing the world towards 100% - block by block. Join us and help us shine more light in our city today!



Policy Reform Work

Soulardarity leaders engaged the Public Service Commission implementing three interventions and submitting comments concerning

- **Fair rates for utility-generated clean energy:** In addition to the negative impacts on the solar industry and current industrial consumers, we believe that this rate proposal would further entrench racial and economic inequity in the energy distribution system. Link: [MPSC Solar Rates Letter](#)
- **Inclusion of Impacted Communities in Energy Decisions:** Wayne County communities, which also experience some of the most intense poverty in the state, need an adequate opportunity to be represented in this rate process, which will affect the future of our energy system. Link: [IRP Comments Document](#)
- **Equitable Access to Distributed Energy:** We presented to the public service commission on making sure that low-income communities and communities of color will have a fair opportunity to get distributed clean energy on our homes and in our communities: (See [presentation](#) here):
- For more visit our website: <http://www.soulardarity.com/miirp>



ON THE TABLE

Wednesday, October 4, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.
45 Highland, Highland Park, MI

On The Table is a unique initiative that draws us together as a community to address the challenges our youth face today and come up with solutions and opportunities for action. Join us for a special event to elevate civic conversation, foster new relationships and inspire ideas for new generation of Highland Parkers. Enjoy special performances and a delicious meal catered by Hand's Knowledge Cafe.

Bring your neighbors! This event is FREE and open to the public.

RSVP: SOULARDARITY.COM/EVENTS

Highland Park Advocacy

In addition to taking leadership in advocacy & education for the communities we serve, here's everything we've done to keep building power in HP around clean energy and solar lights.

- Led by our incredible summer intern Grace Brosnan, a great group of volunteers completed The Utility Justice Survey of Highland Park- [See results here](#)
- The Solutions Project worked with us to provide solar lights to some of our dedicate leaders - [check out the video here!](#)
- A student team from University of Michigan collaborated to create a business model and blueprint for community-owned solar - more info to come in 2018!
- On The Table Event - 40 Highland Parkers and allies joined is for a session to develop ideas and solutions for the youth in Highland Park.



New Solar Education and Community Conversations

Soulardarity held dozens of workshops that have educated hundreds of people of energy issues, including Powerful Conversations, DIY weatherization and supply giveaways, community solar, and passive solar. We had new programs in 2017, including:

- ★ **Advanced Energy Education** sessions with EcoWorks
http://www.soulardarity.com/advanced_energy_education
- ★ **Solar For The People:** An event on how communities can take control of our energy futures with Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association, NAACP, the US Green Building Council, and Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice
- ★ **Making It Ours: A Popular Education Course on Energy Democracy** with East Michigan Environmental Action Council

Recognition and awards for our work include:

- [The Sustainable Communities Champion Award from EcoWorks](#)
(accepted by our staff member Maria Thomas!) (2017)
- [The Vehicle Of Change Competition \(2017\)](#)
<http://nationswell.com/VehicleOfChange/>



It's clear that Highland Parkers are not waiting around for better things to come.

We are returning this city to excellence, and more - we're doing things that have never been seen before. In 2018, we are planning a tremendous growth in staff, supporting new programs in residential and community solar, and continued advocacy for local clean energy solutions. We hope you be apart of a new history of blazing paths of innovation and legacy!