

THE BLUEPRINT FOR ENERGY DEMOCRACY

A GUIDE FOR THE CITY & CITIZENS TO MAKE HIGHLAND PARK, MI
A GLOBAL MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY & SELF-DETERMINATION

**WE'RE TRYING TO GET
OURSELVES ORGANIZED
IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE
CAN BECOME INSEPARABLY
INVOLVED IN AN ACTION
PROGRAM THAT WILL MEET
THE NEEDS, DESIRES, LIKES
OR DISLIKES OF EVERYONE
THAT'S INVOLVED.**

**AND WE WANT YOU
INVOLVED IN IT.**

MALCOLM X



WELCOME TO A BOLD VISION

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We hope that this document can serve as an overarching plan, to provide guidance and inspiration with examples of case studies. Feel free to start from the beginning, or skip to the pages that are most relevant to what you're looking for. What follows is a quick outline of what's in this document.

The first section is background information:

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This is a framework for change, & one stage in the process of Highland Parkers taking back power over this city's future - a future of sustainable energy, green careers, and supporting the ecosystem we are a part of.

100 HP RESIDENTS ENGAGED AT 4 COMMUNITY CAUCUSES

635 HP RESIDENTS SURVEYED AS PART OF LIGHTING AND SOLAR NEEDS

70 HP HOUSEHOLD SURVEYED ON ENERGY JUSTICE IN 2017

30 HIGHLAND PARK HOUSEHOLDS ENERGY NEEDS SURVEYED

MULTI-GENERATIONAL, ITERATIVE, DEEPLY DEMOCRATIC.

(Highland Parkers of all ages participated. It included long-term residents and new arrivals, centering the needs of our historic population.)

TWO PRIOR RESEARCH PROCESSES FROM 2015 AND 2017, "GET FREE REPORT" AND "LET THERE BE LIGHT PROPOSAL."

AT EVERY STAGE IN THE PROCESS, THE IDEAS & PROPOSALS WERE REVIEWED & APPROVED BY HIGHLAND PARKER'S.

THE PROCESS

Based on Conversations within the Community

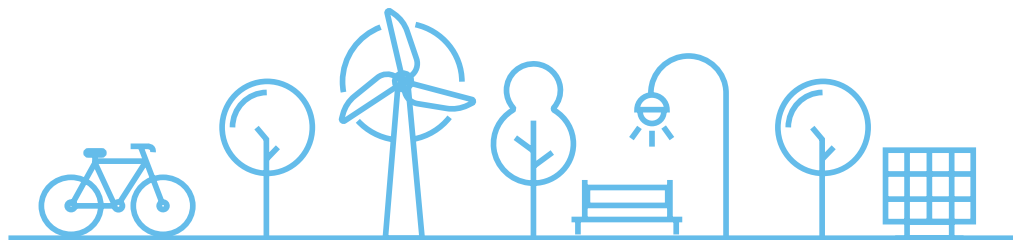
Soulardarity formed in response to DTE Energy's removal of over 1000 streetlights from the City of Highland Park. Soulardarity has spent six years organizing to restore lighting through solar power, conducting energy education, and building a shared community vision for democracy and sustainability. The Blueprint for Energy Democracy (BFED) is a

culmination of these first six years of effort. Through the work required to develop Let There Be Light, our proposal for full restoration of street lighting through solar power, it became clear that the City needed a holistic plan that would address the many intersecting issues connected to energy. That plan is the Blueprint for Energy Democracy.

Thank you to the Highland Parkers who led and participated in this process

THE GOAL

*To Make Highland Park a Global Model
of Sustainability & Self-Determination*



A team of Soulardarity members and Highland Park partners shaped the creation of the goal of the BFED. It was informed by the perspective of Highland Parkers who remember growing up in a Highland Park where everything was available, from entertainment to economic opportunity, and it was known globally as a hub of innovation. We aim to reclaim that title, to return to the excellence that Highland Park was once known for.

Our team also desired to go farther than that. With scarce time to address climate change, and crises driven by the loss of community and democratic control, it was clear that the past was not enough. We wanted this plan to move Highland Park towards sustainability from an economic, environmental, and cultural standpoint, and to be grounded in the

agency and inclusion of all of Highland Park's people and all the communities that will be impacted by our decisions - in a word, self-determination.

We want to note that this is a blueprint and not a finalized plan. Once we started building it, we are finding that there are approaches that we hadn't considered before and there are approaches we thought would work but may not be the best strategic approach. Going forward, we want to engage more with people who rent and youth because these two groups were not consulted as much as is necessary in the initial process. Additionally, there is a need to develop initiatives around food, education and transportation by applying some of the energy-related strategies in this document. As we construct this vision the blueprint will evolve and change.



ENERGY DEMOCRACY

Creating just energy systems and in the process, if you are impacted by a decision about energy, you should get a voice in that decision, people are always put ahead of profit and input is highly valued. It means building an energy system that prioritizes energy efficiency, clean and renewable energy sources, local control and education and information.



SELF-DETERMINATION

The power of Highland Parkers, especially as a majority Black community, to control the future of Highland Park. This includes political and economic decision making power, sustainability and self-determination.



SUSTAINABILITY

The cultural, political and ecological aspects of community are stable and resilient.

HIGHLAND PARK IS A MICROCOSM

1890

The village of Highland Park, MI was incorporated.

1900

Population of Highland Park is 427 residents at this time and within ten years grew to 4,120 residents.

1910-1920

City of Highland Park's population grew to 46,499 making it, at the time, the fastest growing city in the world. Its public schools were noted as being the best in the country.

1920

Henry Ford is credited for bringing innovation to Highland Park with his auto plant. However he is not as widely known for almost 10 years of supremacist culture he brought to the city as well. Despite unsubstantiated claims that he was not aware of the content being published under his name, the influence of the anti-semitic literature was impactful on a global level.

A PLACE WHERE RACISM AND CORPORATE CONTROL CONTINUE TO TANGLE WITH THOSE WHO, AGAINST THE ODDS AND AT GREAT RISK, HAVE ENDEAVORED TO MOVE US FORWARD TOWARDS SOMETHING BETTER.

1931

The chapter of the The Black Legion, founded in Highland Park. The Legion was a militia group and a white supremacist organization in the Midwestern United States during the Great Depression. It was rumored in the mid-1930s in the Detroit area to be responsible for numerous murders and attacks on persons and property. "Numerous public and business officials of Highland Park, including the chief of police, a mayor, and a city councilman, joined this group. Convictions enforced by Detroit's Wayne County Prosecutor ended the reign of the Legion.

1950

Ford Motor Company winds down operations at its Highland Park plant. With the loss of industrial jobs then came declines in population and tax base accompanied by an increase in street crime.

1967

White flight, which is already in motion driven by real estate



speculation is accelerated by the Detroit 12th Street Rebellion. The rebellion itself being a response to a pattern of racist police brutality.

1980s

The city population was majority black and impoverished.

1990s

Chrysler moved its headquarters from Highland Park to Auburn Hills when the auto plants moved out, the workers moved to follow the jobs. Highland Park, like Detroit, experienced the uncertainty of capital mobility. The move dislocated a total of 6,000 jobs over this period.

2001-2009

Highland Park's mounting fiscal crisis, allows for an appointed emergency financial manager for the city under the supervision of the State of Michigan.

2010

The population fell to 11,776 according to the census; the unemployment rate dropped to 20% from 35%.



AUG 2011

More than two-thirds of the streetlights in Highland Park were removed by the city. The street lights were not only turned off, but decommissioned, or removed from their posts, due to an inability to pay a \$60,000 per month electric bill. The city advised residents to keep porch lights on in order to deter crime.

2012

Highland Park's water treatment plant is shut down and the city starts buying water from Detroit's Water and Sewerage Department. No water bills are issued during the transition.

NOV 2013

Detroit Water and Sewerage Department files a lawsuit against the City of Highland Park regarding unpaid sewage services and water totaling \$17.7 million.

"AS WE MOVE FORWARD IN DETROIT, THERE MUST BE A MENDING OF THE HUMAN FABRIC THAT WAS RENT INTO MUNICIPAL PIECES WITH THE DIVISIONS OF CITY AND SUBURBS. SMALL, CONTINUAL ACTS OF RECONCILIATION ARE CALLED FOR HERE, AS SECTIONS OF THE CITY RISE AGAIN."

- MARSHA MUSIC

THE PROBLEM

Highland Park has a great number of problems facing it. A reasonable person might ask why, among so many different issues, Highland Park needs a Blueprint for Energy Democracy.

IN WAYNE COUNTY, HOUSEHOLDS BELOW 50% OF THE POVERTY LEVEL SPEND 30% OF THEIR INCOME ON ENERGY.

ENERGY POVERTY IS AT CRISIS LEVELS IN HIGHLAND PARK

In a 2017 survey of 70 Highland Park households, Soulardarity found that 45% have trouble paying gas and electric bills, 56% have used utility assistance, and 25% have experienced a gas or electric shutoff - 68% of those shut-offs in the winter months. In Wayne County, households below 50% of the poverty level spend 30% of their income on energy. In 2019, DTE Energy has proposed rate increases that will hit low-income ratepayers the hardest, with increases in electric rates up to 45% for the lowest usage, lowest income customers. Energy poverty is not inevitable, however DTE can make money off of it as a state-protected monopoly.

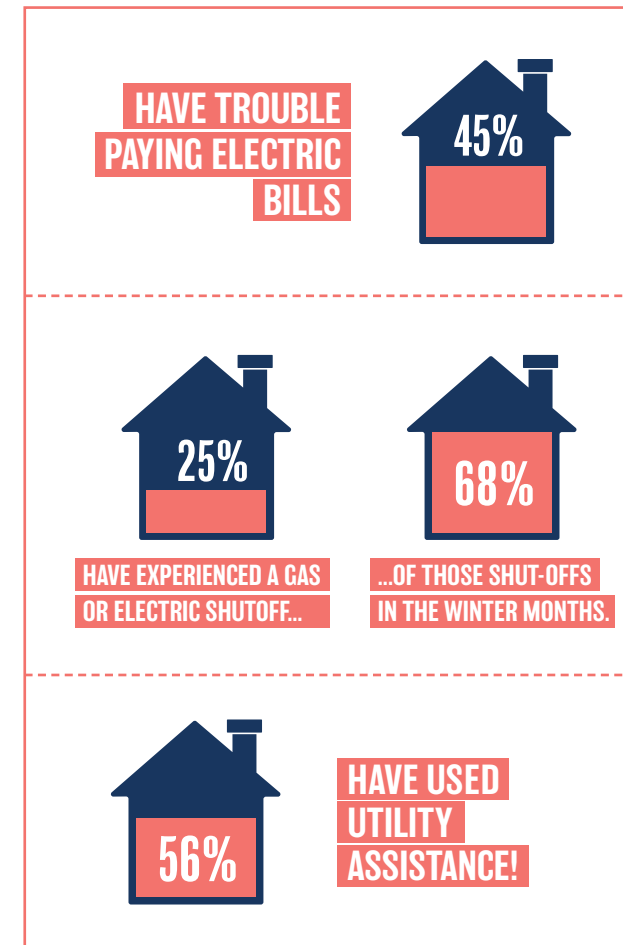
LOCAL DEMOCRACY IS IN CRISIS

Numerous Highland Park institutions have gone in and out of emergency management over the past decade. Highland Parkers are justly fed up with being left out of the decisions that impact our lives. Voter turnout is abysmally low and civic participation is barely supported by the City.

Communication channels from the City are largely confined to email and social media, leaving a tremendous number of Highland Parkers who lack internet access in the dark on critical issues. Engaged citizens struggle to access basic information. In doing research for this report, Soulardarity was required to file a FOIA request to simply access the City's 2018 budget.

CITY BUDGETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE ARE THREATENED

Pending lawsuits with Detroit Water and Sewage Department and Michigan Department of Transportation are holding millions of dollars in the balance. Meanwhile, the City needs tens of millions to invest in critical infrastructure upgrades, improved operations, and community services. Without new revenue, the City stands at risk of being driven back into emergency management and stripped of local control. Michigan's crumbling infrastructure and growing population means increased strain on electrical and natural gas systems. This increases the likelihood of events such as black outs and shortage of gas occur to communities that need it most.



HIGHLAND PARKERS ARE UNPREPARED FOR MAJOR EMERGENCIES

These include multi-day power outages, a major flooding event, or extreme temperatures caused by climate change. There are many weather events that could be catastrophic. DTE is proposing new gas plants, and already owns gas pipelines, that further ecological destruction and climate instability, putting Highland Parkers at increasing risk.

DEVELOPMENT IS COMING, BUT ITS BENEFITS ARE NOT GUARANTEED.

There is no doubt that development will happen in Highland Park, especially along the Woodward corridor connecting downtown Detroit and the suburbs. The overwhelming evidence from Detroit shows that development is most often displacing historic and impoverished residents, in favor of higher income people and businesses.

WHEN THE BASICS OF LIFE ARE THREATENED BY ECOLOGICAL HARM, THE CONSEQUENCES FALL THE HARDEST ON PEOPLE ALREADY SYSTEMATICALLY DEPRIVED OF RESOURCES & SELF DETERMINATION.

- Aurora Levins Morales, Medicine Stories

The Blueprint for Energy Democracy is an answer to these problems. It is a road map for the city and citizens to work together on a better future for Highland Park. To "Return to Excellence" as the City's motto states, we must set new standards.

THE BENEFITS

To achieve the vision we've laid out, it's going to take dedicated action and visionary organizing from Highland Park's citizens. It's also going to take leadership and commitment from the City as an institution. As we move forward, it's important to be clear about the benefits to the City and the Citizens of this plan:

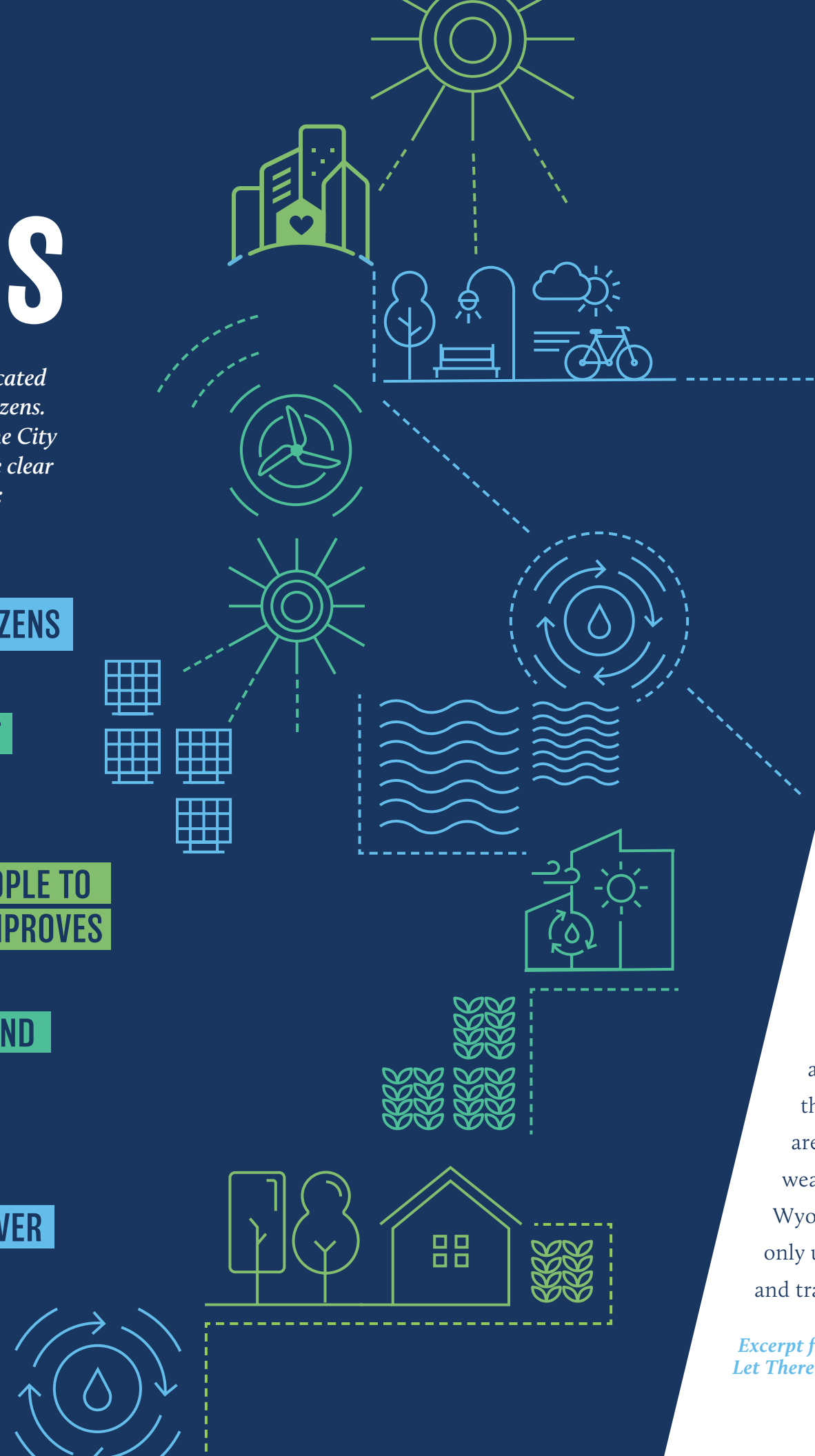
1 LOWER COSTS FOR CITY AND CITIZENS

2 RESTORED AND INCREASED CONTROL OF PUBLIC SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

3 DEVELOPMENT THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO STAY HERE AS HIGHLAND PARK IMPROVES

4 IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR HIGHLAND PARK RESIDENTS IN TERMS OF JOBS, HEALTH, & BEAUTIFICATION

5 INCREASED LOCAL POLITICAL POWER & DEMOCRACY



THE VISION

"Every year, unemployment and poverty levels shrink as new jobs in weatherization, clean energy, and community-based industry expand. The City is a hub of energy innovation regionally and nationally. Highland Park's legacy of technological and social innovation has extended, and is leading the cities of Southeast Michigan in developing clean and community-oriented energy economy that is a model worldwide. While other cities are devastated by power outages, extreme weather events, and spikes in the cost of coal from Wyoming and oil from Kuwait, Highland Park is not only unaffected - it is a source of stability, strength, and transformative vision for the region."

*Excerpt from vision statement of
Let There Be Light proposal, 2016*

PROPOSALS & POLICIES

Through a series of community caucuses, membership meetings, & stakeholder engagement, we arrived at this 5 point framework.



ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

We need to close the communication disconnect between the City and the Citizens. We need active impactful community engagement on all city issues, transparent operations, and fair treatment of all citizens.



EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

We need plans and standards that put sustainability, economic equity, and community needs first. Truly affordable housing based on local incomes and Highland Parker-led development are core components.



HEALTHY HOMES

We need to get Highland Park families of all sizes and formations towards health, comfort, and financial stability. Renters and owners need support to repair and modernize their homes.



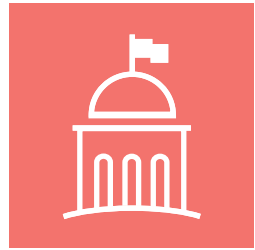
SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

We need investments in smart and resilient lighting, water, transportation, and waste management systems that generate municipal revenue, community wellness, and good services for citizens.



JOBS & CAREERS

We need pathways to employment for Highland Park's youth and adults. Education and training programs will enable Highland Parkers to build careers that build our community.



ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

OVERVIEW

Highland Parkers don't trust city government after a history of city government not listening to or meeting the needs of HP residents. Highland Parkers struggle to get accurate and timely information about government processes and decisions that affect their lives, from infrastructure planning and development to basic household services. Highland Parkers often

have to rely on their relationships with City officials to address their issues, rather than a fair process that values all citizens equally. The government has been working in crisis mode for years, constantly under the threat of emergency management. We need to empower our government to enact self determination so they aren't under the threat of emergency management, which goes up to the highest levels of our state government. To truly engage residents in finding solutions to our individual and collective issues, the City must invest in impactful community engagement, transparent operations, and the overall regard for citizen input as a value. The proposals in this section focus on actionable ways to carry that work forward.

KEY PROPOSALS



Participatory Budgeting

that engages citizens in directly distributing portions of the City budget and development revenue. A strong decision making process when it comes to energy can be applied to other things like education and transportation budgets as well as launching projects like a dog park or other ideas people have. Case studies exist around the country and a project has been successfully advanced in southwest Detroit. Read more at Invest Detroit's 2019 "We Decide Detroit Evaluation Report."



Launch Equitable Internet

Initiative to expand internet access in Highland Park and create community intranet to support communication between the city and the people of Highland Park, and between Highland Parkers to stay informed, connected and also to be able to communicate quickly in an emergency.



Establish community engagement standards for City Council,

Administration, all city commissions, and major civic institutions and developers. Every stage of the development process,

from setting frameworks and priorities to making detailed decisions should include community input and mechanisms for accountability.



Form Sustainability Commission

to model deep democracy, integrate planning across city departments, and develop and advance projects and proposals. This is a critical first stage to be able to act on the other proposals in this document.

CASE STUDY 01

Invest Detroit

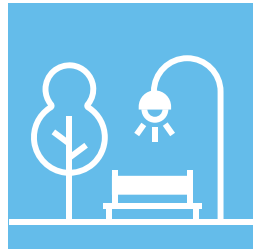
In 2018, Invest Detroit held a vote on what to do with money they had for projects in Southwest Detroit. This was part of a participatory budgeting process where residents, including youth, got a say in how community money is spent. First, Invest Detroit had an information session about the process and residents volunteered to be on the steering committee. Then, the steering committee designed what the rest of the process would be. Next, ideas were collected through trainings, and outreach (canvassing, community meetings, online). Then the committees met to decide on their plans, creating a ballot to vote on. Last, people in the community got a chance to vote on the proposals for where the money should be spent. The process took from January to June and the final results were to add benches, trash cans and other park things around the Clark Park rec center, to repair a gazebo for youth to hangout at, and to make an accessible playground where disabled and non-disabled children could all play.

"TO TRULY ENGAGE RESIDENTS IN FINDING SOLUTIONS TO OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ISSUES, THE CITY MUST INVEST IN IMPACTFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, TRANSPARENT OPERATIONS, & THE OVERALL REGARD FOR CITIZEN INPUT AS A VALUE."

CASE STUDY 02

Equitable Internet Initiative

The Equitable Internet Initiative in Detroit is a collaboration to install and maintain community-controlled internet in three Detroit neighborhoods. A main part of the project is training people, especially youth, in those neighborhoods on how to set up and maintain those systems, and other digital literacy skills. This program operates within a framework of increasing community resilience and safety-- by controlling their own internet they are more prepared for natural and political disasters.



EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

With huge amounts of land in City or Land Bank control, a low and still dropping population, a major need for revenue, and already high tax rates, it is no question that Highland Park needs development. With so many residents struggling to pay bills and lacking economic opportunity, it is critical that the City approach development with an equitable lens, aiming to create opportunities for Highland Park residents to lead and benefit from development. The Planning Department should set strong development standards that put sustainability, economic equity, and community needs first. Updates to the master plan should occur with those standards in mind. There are many Highland Parkers already active in developing on their blocks, through their businesses, or through major development initiatives. The City should be actively looking to support those citizen-led efforts, building on assets we already have and building wealth here.

KEY PROPOSALS

- ✓ **Establish a strong Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)** ordinance to ensure that developers wishing to profit off Highland Park must create desired outcomes by the community in order to do so. Highland Parkers want to be a part of the redevelopment process, ensuring that jobs are centered on and developed in Highland Park. CBA's should specifically provide for monies to be deposited into an ongoing workforce development fund, ensuring Highland Parkers have the opportunity to learn the skills that will be inevitably required to redevelop Highland Park.
- ✓ **Create community-centered redevelopment plan** that acknowledges true affordability based on Highland Park's actual median household income (Less than \$16,000.00 in 2017), community-identified needs, and long-term planning for smart growth of municipal revenue that does not drive displacement.
- ✓ **Incentives for Highland Park-based development initiatives** including grants, technical support, and financing, with priority given to projects that align with the other key areas of this framework, such as the formation of an HP Community Land Trust.
- ✓ **Simplify process for Highland Parkers to purchase land** and put it to use for community projects through a better side lot program, incentives for property revitalization, and clear application procedures.

CASE STUDY 02

Parker Village

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. It's a powerful first step in Parker Village's first phase, creating a community gathering space with a shipping container cafe and aquaponics garden. This initiative demonstrates what solar can offer to a community's revitalization, literally lighting the way for Parker Village to grow into the full, transformative potential it holds. We believe in keeping business local, so we worked with a Michigan manufacturer, Solartonic, and Highland Park-based Ryter Cooperative Industries on the build and installation of this light.

Juan Shannon, long-time Highland Parker and owner of Modern Tribe Communications, Inc. bought the old Thompson Elementary School on the eastside of HP to start Parker Village, a community resource hub focusing on technological innovation and community enterprise. Parker Village is a platform for Highland Park innovators to be empowered, resourced, and networked into a powerful movement for Highland Park's revitalization.



CASE STUDY 01

Avalon Village

The Avalon Village is a sustainable eco-village being built in Highland Park, MI. Avalon Village is the home of the very first residential solar-powered streetlight in Highland Park in 2014. AV is transforming one of the city's most blighted blocks into a safe, functional, and environmentally friendly space for the entire community. The inspiration behind this transformative project is 2 year-old Jakobi RA who was killed by a hit-and-run

driver in 2007. In memory of his honor, Jakobi RA Park was created and serves as a gathering place for celebrations, community service projects, activities and events throughout the year. Construction is underway right now on The Homework House, The Goddess Marketplace and landscaping/beautification. Future plans include The Avalon Village Healing House, The Blue Moon Cafe and The Avalon Village Community Greenhouse.



HEALTHY HOMES

OVERVIEW

People are struggling with high costs and health issues derived from the rising cost of utilities. DTE has nearly doubled rates on residential customers in the past 20 years, and Highland Park residents have seen a 100% water rate increase. The City's financing plan for improvements projects water rates increasing even further between now and 2025. Highland Park households face high rates of energy poverty, regular utility shut-offs, and reliance on assistance programs that don't serve all income levels and often aren't tailored to household needs. The historic housing stock in Highland Park is an incredible asset for families and our community as a whole, but has high maintenance and upgrade costs. Highland Park families of all sizes and formations should be able to live comfortably and affordably, with access to the resources they need to invest in their homes. Attention must be given to homeowners and renters alike, as they face unique struggles to finance and enact energy saving and generating actions on their homes.

"IN WAYNE COUNTY, POOR HOUSEHOLDS ARE SPENDING OVER 40% OF INCOME ON THESE CRITICAL SERVICES ALONE - IF THEY CAN EVEN AFFORD THEM."



KEY PROPOSALS

- ✓ **Grants and low-to-no interest financing for home repair, weatherization, and sustainable home upgrades for households at all income levels, rented and owned, to improve health, comfort, and financial viability of homes, including historic and unique Highland Park houses.**
- ✓ **Incentives for green infrastructure** or homes and businesses to minimize cost impact on water system.
- ✓ **Municipal advocacy for energy affordability and access to clean energy** for Highland Park households, businesses, and institutions, including the City government. Many of the goals in this framework require actions outside the jurisdiction of the City government, so Highland Park must become an active advocate with regulatory and legislative bodies at all levels. Soulardarity has intervened in multiple contested cases of the Michigan Public Service Commission, and Highland Park water activists are advocating for affordability plans at the state level. The City should be an active partner and supporter in these efforts and beyond.
- ✓ **Implement affordability plans for water, electricity, heat, and internet** that protect households from rising costs for all basic goods. In Wayne County, poor households are spending over 40% of income on these critical services alone - if they can even afford them. 51% of residents in the tri-country area report switching between paying their energy and water bills. A robust affordability plan would follow the accepted standards of 6% of gross household income for energy bills and 4.5% for water. (1) There is no established standard for internet affordability - yet - but the critical need for internet access implies that it must be considered in a cumulative affordability standard. Setting these benchmarks will drive decision-making that puts residents first
- ✓ **Create a resident resource hub** to access household support services. To access even the programs they're qualified for, Highland Parkers must go deal with numerous locations, agencies, and applications that decrease access. Highland Parkers should have a one-stop shop for all of the nonprofit and governmental support services available to them.

CASE STUDY

PUSH Green

Launched in 2012, PUSH Green has multiple initiatives to create healthy homes in New York State. As of 2016, they had assisted over 500 homes and businesses to do energy efficiency retrofits. One of their main initiatives is to provide free or low cost energy assessments so that people can then access state funds for repairs. They also provide repairs that allow low-income residents to qualify for additional weatherization and energy saving home improvements. Their Solar Program connects people to funding and discounts for solar installation. Overall, PUSH Green connects people to the services they need to make their home or business more energy efficient and comfortable.





JOBS & CAREERS

OVERVIEW

Highland Park has one of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in the country. Highland Park students are not getting the education they need and deserve to succeed and Highland Park’s adult residents are struggling to find economic opportunity. Many Highland Parkers leave the city, taking their talents (and taxes) with them. We know that there is tremendous work needed to make Highland Park a model 21st century City, from home weatherization and rehabilitation to sustainable infrastructure development and clean energy installation or manufacture. Instead of “greening” a process that leads to short term jobs that don’t offer worker protections, we need to build systems where people can get their needs met regardless of income level or job status, where workers make the decisions about their labor, and these decisions are made with the well-being of all people and our ecosystem at the center.

KEY PROPOSALS

Find out what major spenders in the city, including City Government, are spending money on already, and create worker-owned cooperatives that provide those services so that the money spent creates jobs in Highland Park and keeps revenue in the city rather than paying outside groups to provide those services. We first need to do an analysis of where the city is buying things like energy, water, and professional services and how we could meet those needs.

This is based on the Cleveland Model which did the steps mentioned above in Cleveland, Ohio. Benefits of the model are each worker owner has a voice in how company is run, wealth is distributed within the worker’s communities instead of spread to outside contractors, the Cleveland Model

Nonprofit gives technical assistance and runs a loan fund for all of its member co-ops. Unlike the Cleveland Model, we would want to have unionized co-ops or other mechanisms for worker protection and power.

COOPERATIVES ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE, ADDRESS LOCAL ISSUES, AND PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE AND RELIABLE EMPLOYMENT IF SUCCESSFUL, PROTECTING HIGHLAND PARK FROM THE BOOM-AND-BUST CYCLE OF BIG BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT.

✓ **Analyze national and international economic trends to identify best career potential for HP youth.**
The advancement of robotics and digital technology are changing what employment looks like. Highland Park must analyze these trends, identify likely local career opportunities, and build out training and preparation programs in our education system to put our youth in the best possible position. After conducting the analyses above, form program to support development of cooperative enterprises in Highland Park to meet these needs. Cooperatives are more productive, address local issues, and provide sustainable and reliable employment if successful, protecting Highland Park from the boom-and-bust cycle of big business employment.

✓ **Develop job training programs** that will prepare Highland Parkers of all ages for the employment opportunities created by the initiatives identified in this framework and the analysis created above.

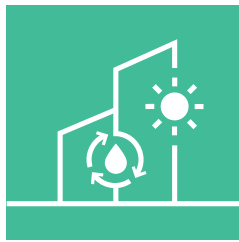


CASE STUDY 01 *Cooperation Jackson*

Cooperation Jackson supports local co-ops that all in turn support each other. These interlocked co-ops were created for the purpose of realizing Black self-determination and economic justice in Jackson, Mississippi and the surrounding region. One of the co-ops is the Freedom Farms Coop which provides food to members including Nubia’s Place Café and Catering Cooperative which is worker-owned and also run by Cooperation Jackson. The Green Team is a lawn care and composting co-operative that works with food waste from the café and services Cooperation Jackson community land trust properties as well as many clients. In 2019, they are opening a building for their Community Production Cooperative which plans to use 3D fabrication to make parts for housing co-ops.

CASE STUDY 02 *Co-op Power*

Co-op Power is made up of six local energy co-ops, all in the northeast United States. These six co-ops provide on a range of services and products including weatherizing and insulating buildings, installing solar panels, running businesses such as a plant that makes biodiesel, job training, member education and public policy advocacy. Co-op Power is designed specifically to be accessible to low income communities and communities of color.



SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

Over the next five years, the City will be spending hundreds of millions of dollars on infrastructure upgrades - water infrastructure alone will cost nearly \$100 million. The city is looking to Highland parkers to offset the costs by increasing water rates, which many people cannot afford. We need to ensure that this infrastructure is implemented in a way that is affordable and controlled by the community. We have some proposals that could, over time, offset the costs of building this infrastructure, and address multiple needs at once, such as the CWERC described below. Other pieces can be achieved by incentivizing citizen action and working with community organizations.

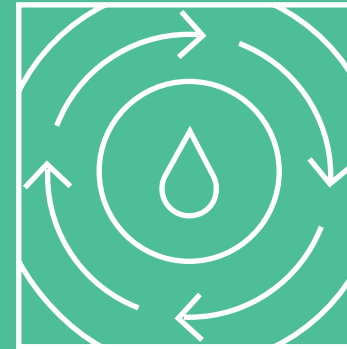
KEY PROPOSALS

- ✓ **Create revenue streams through municipal energy upgrades** to finance further programs. Energy efficiency alone could create the revenue needed for further investments.
- ✓ **Negotiate franchise agreement with DTE** that protects city and citizens from liability, improves negotiation terms for infrastructure projects, and generates revenue. Model franchise agreements can include requirements for utility providers to bring their infrastructure underground while the City is opening up the public right of way, as is planned over the next 5 years.
- ✓ **Create citywide solar-powered LED smart lighting system** to provide locked-in infrastructure maintenance cost, increase walkability and development viability of neighborhoods, connect to community intranet, and provide lighting, communications, and emergency power during grid failure.
- ✓ **Launch Solarize HP Initiative** to match 100% of electricity demand in HP through solar production, which is possible through the sole use of rooftops of buildings in good condition, through a mix of support code updates, incentives, and advocacy with the MPSC and DTE to support this goal.
- ✓ **Build Community Water & Energy Resource Center (CWERC)**, a highly revenue positive project that uses proven technology to transform wastewater streams and food waste into energy, recycled water, and heat. This project alone could provide all the financing needed for the restoration of the water plant, along with hundreds of thousands of dollars in avoided costs to repair/replace dated infrastructure, while making rate increases obsolete.
- ✓ **Conduct an economic justice assessment** of historic harms done to the City by other actors and plan for pursuing financial and other forms of

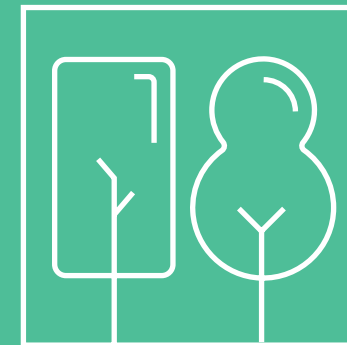
WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THIS INFRASTRUCTURE IS IMPLEMENTED IN A WAY THAT IS AFFORDABLE AND CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNITY.

remuneration. This money could then go towards projects such as the CWERC.

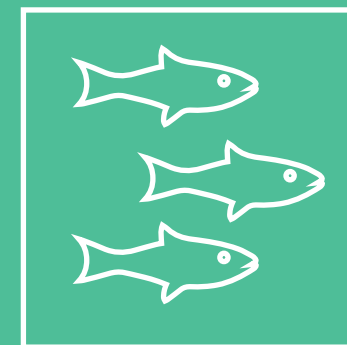
- ✓ **Pursue community and public ownership** of infrastructure through micro-grids, cooperatives, and municipalization to gain the capacity to run these projects.



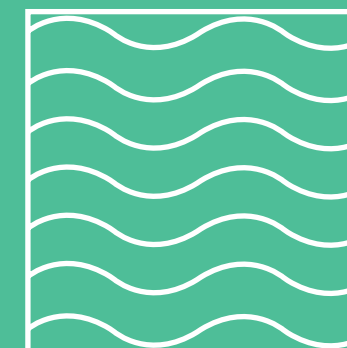
RECYCLED WATER CYCLE



GREEN NEIGHBORHOODS



HABITAT



GROUNDWATER

CASE STUDY 01

Winter Parks, Florida

In 2004, the City of Winter Parks, Florida, successfully signed a Bulk Power contract with their serving investor utility, Progress Energy Florida, thus launching the creation of a city owned electric utility and successfully completing the municipalization process. This came after the franchise agreement between the city and Progress Energy expired in 2001, jump-starting conversations around municipalization. Residents and the local city council began to explore municipalization together when the new franchise agreement proposed by the utility provided no opt-out clauses for the city, no performance guarantees for the utility, and removed the right of the city to repurchase utility infrastructure (the city initially sold to Progress Energy the municipally owned electric system in 1927). The utility spent \$523,000 trying to dissuade residents from voting for municipalization, so the city then had to spend fundraised and city money (about \$100,000) on addressing the misinformation/half truths from the utility.

Ultimately, the residents of Winter Parks voted 69% in favor of municipalization and Progress Energy Florida was forced to sign over its assets the following year. Since then, the city utility has reported improved storm response, increased customer satisfaction, and an improved city bond rating (A to AA-). The municipalization of Winter Parks, Florida was a long and arduous process, but with the concerted and collective effort, the city was able to take back control of their energy system and bring the community together along the way (Knight and Warren, 2018).

CASE STUDY 02

Ann Arbor, Michigan

The City of Ann Arbor established a franchise agreement in 1997 with three utilities, (1) Nordic Electric, L.L.C. and (2) Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. and (3) DTE Energy Marketing, Inc. to be valid for five years (C). While these franchise agreements expired in 2002, they established groundbreaking requirements for promoting sustainability and the use of renewable resources by investor utilities. The primary method this was achieved by was requiring the utilities to gradually increase the percent of energy supplied to the city to be obtained from renewable resources. The franchise agreement required 2% in the first year of the five year agreement and increased incrementally until the franchise agreement expired (4% - 2nd year, 6% - 3rd year, 8% - 4th year, 10% - 5 year). Failure to meet these requirements meant the utility must make a payment in the amount of \$.015 for each kWh it was short of its requirement. Additionally, the utility was required to offer to all its customers in the city the option to purchase a portion of their power that is produced by renewable energy sources. See more in Appendix C.

ON SELF DETERMINATION

SELF-DETERMINATION
MEANS MANY THINGS TO
MANY PEOPLE. FOR US AT
SOULARDARITY, IT MEANS
THE POWER OF HIGHLAND
PARKERS, ESPECIALLY
AS A MAJORITY BLACK
COMMUNITY, TO CONTROL
THE FUTURE OF HIGHLAND
PARK.



WHAT'S NEXT

How we get there matters

The Jackson's People's Assembly Model will be our blueprints North Star. A People's Assembly first and foremost is a mass gathering of people organized and assembled to address essential social issues and/or questions pertinent to a community using a particular process.

Soulardarity will hold a series of Community Caucuses, modeled after the People's Movement Assemblies, to steer the development of this framework. Decisions about what we work on, in what order, will be driven by democratic community leadership and informed by analysis of the economic, political, and social trends affecting the City. The People's Assembly model informs how projects, initiatives and programs will be formed and implemented. People's Assemblies have been organized around the world, including in Nepal, Greece, Spain, Tunisia, Egypt and Burkina Faso, to name a few.

The People's Movement Assemblies are a structure used by Cooperation Jackson, a network of co-ops and organizers working to create an

alternative, sustainable economy in Jackson, Mississippi that centers Black self-determination.

According to Cooperation Jackson, when a large group of people (the Assembly) gets together to make decisions collectively, and shows up to follow through on those decisions over time, they can counteract the power of businesses and the government. This is called acting as a "dual power"-- basically, it means they become an institution to be reckoned with, and can stop or change policies and actions by other groups, as well as create their own actions and policies. Strategic plans, intensive education, capacity building, trust building, persistence and determination-- these expressions of people power re-emerged time and again in the Afrikan communities as a means to resist the systemic exploitation and terror of white supremacy and to exercise and exert some degree of self-determination.

We plan to continue to support People's Movement Assemblies outside of the work to create this document so that emerging needs can be met and we

can build power in Highland Park. Building power is the basis from which everything else is possible..

GROWING MEMBERSHIP

In order to build power, Soulardarity also plans to develop strong teams focused on member outreach and another on education. For example, the education team might design a workshop and outreach would make sure people could get there. The more informed and connected our member base, the stronger Highland Park will be.

To learn more, refer to "Peoples Movement Assembly Organizing Handbook," by Rubén Solís Garcia, Seth Markle, Foluke Nunn, Emery Wright, & Stephanie Guilloud. The basic outlines of the Jackson's People's Assembly model can be found in the [Jackson-Kush Plan](#).

FUNDING

We are working to shift to a more sustainable model of funding where Highland Parkers have more say over what happens with the money brought in for these proposals. While we can still seek support from large donors and foundations, having a strong member base will allow us to have economic resilience in our projects.

We want to redirect funds that are going to DTE towards infrastructure that actually benefits Highland Parkers and isn't run in a way that extracts as much money as possible out of people. Many of the proposals in this document generate more than they cost, so once they are in place Highland Parkers would be more financially supported.

For example: our research has indicated that through solar on the rooftops of buildings in good condition in Highland Park, we could meet over 96% of residential and

commercial energy demand. That's nearly \$13 million that is currently leaving the community every year in energy bills, that with solar energy would become dollars that stay in Highland Park. The upfront cost of that much solar is roughly \$160 million done at scale. Over a conservative 20 year life span, that solar would keep over \$260 million in Highland Park. That means that solar could potentially be putting over \$5 million each back into the Highland Park economy every year. This is the basis on which the city can seek financing and grants to support this plan - by showing the potential to build and sustain wealth for the community.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

As we build these projects, we are working not just to create energy democracy, but to address multiple needs in our community. We know that all systems are interconnected. A strong food system needs locally controlled utilities to be able to

function sustainability. Direct democracy practices (where everyone gets one vote regardless of money or status) makes it possible to come up with solutions for transportation that serve everyone. Hopefully, the plans and ideas in this document reflect the reality that how we get there matters, and that comes from meeting people's needs in a way that supports our ecosystem and builds community power. At the end of the day, we are not just fighting for solar panels or streetlights, although those things are important-- we are fighting for a city in which the interconnectedness of all things, people, plants, energy, water, housing, is valued and centered. As Aurora Levins Morales says about the ecosystem we are part of, "...it is not an "environment" but an intricate, living web of beings, a kinship (Medicine Stories, 16)," and so, too, our organizing is about not just tasks to complete, but how we support the interconnectedness of our community-- that "living web," that is so essential.

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RESOURCES

The digital appendix can be found at:

tinyurl.com/BFEDappendix

Contents of the digital appendix include:

- Previous research by Soulardarity
- HP campaign goals
- Submitted FOIA requests
- Franchise comparisons and the Foote Act
- Energy Commissions in Michigan
- Guide to the Blueprint's google drive
- Sustainability action plans from other cities
- Members on the local emergency financial assistance loan board
- Information on relevant state legislation

A living list of prospective and active partners can be found at:

tinyurl.com/BFEDpartners

Get Involved

Excited about the ideas in this blueprint? Want to get involved?

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