

4 YEAR

Impact Report



**Planet
Detroit**

2019-2022



Table of Contents

4 **Four Years of Impactful Reporting on Climate Change, Equity, and Public Health**

5 **Our Representative, Collaborative, and Community-based Model**

7 **Key Impacts**

20 **Impact Stories**

37 **Our Audience**

39 **Recognition**

42 **Financials**

44 **Acknowledgements**

Planet Detroit's mission is to hold power accountable, spotlight solutions, and serve our community through environmental and public health journalism that centers grassroots experience.

**Accountability
Journalism**

Reporting on the actions of polluters and powerful entities that cause harm.

**Community Service
Journalism**

Providing information, resources, guides and opportunities to help people navigate their lives and connect with their communities.

**Solutions-Based
Journalism**

Reporting on individuals, organizations and businesses working on responses to problems and creating change.

Four Years of Impactful Reporting on Climate Change, Equity, and Public Health

Planet Detroit is filling a need in Southeast Michigan for high quality, local environmental coverage.

This document highlights how Planet Detroit is growing representation in journalism, amplifying the impact of our reporting through partnerships, and strengthening local environmental and public health coverage through meaningful cross-sector collaborations. As co-founder of Planet Detroit, I'm so proud of the difference we've made over the past four years. As we continue to grow, we remain committed to our goals to:

- **Increase pressure** on powerful entities to protect communities and reduce environmental harm through our reporting on the actions of polluters, utilities and other powerful entities.
- **Increase awareness** of positive actions in the community to spur hope, inspiration and action by reporting on individuals, organizations and businesses working to create change and resilience.
- **Empower people** to take action in their communities by providing information, guides, resources and opportunities to help people navigate their lives and connect with their communities and resources.
- **Create accessible reporting** representative of under-represented grassroots community experience, include ethnic and BIPOC perspectives, and provide opportunities for mentorships, training, and reporting.

Planet Detroit has emerged as a central voice in Metro Detroit's reporting landscape. I'm inspired by the impact we've had, and the impact we've yet to see, and I know it's because of our readers and dedicated partners that we've come so far. Thank you for being here with us. We look forward to our future together.

With gratitude



Nina Ignaczak
Founder & Editor,
Planet Detroit

Our Representative, Collaborative, and Community- based Model

Planet Detroit was founded in 2019 to provide more in depth local reporting about environmental issues. We are the only newsroom in the state solely focused on climate change, equity, and the public health issues that impact our families and our communities. Our reporting provides accountability, solutions-based and community service journalism.

We publish weekly original reporting distributed via newsletters, serving **over 7,000 subscribers and over 20,000 social media followers**. Our journalism is frequently amplified and republished by local and national media, including radio, TV, and outlets like the Guardian, Next City, Grist, and the Detroit Free Press, and local ethnic outlets like the Yemeni American News and El Central Hispanic News.

We report on individuals, organizations, and businesses working to create change and build environmental and climate equity. We highlight solutions to amplify grassroots work to help those projects advance and inform policy. We also cover the activities of polluters and other influential entities that are responsible for causing harm. Our priority is to center the viewpoint of grassroots communities that are disproportionately affected by harm.

But we don't just report on these communities; we expand opportunities for underrepresented communities to participate in our journalism by hiring journalists of color, hosting reporting mentorships for BIPOC residents, and sourcing community leaders and members in our reporting. We also make our reporting accessible to ethnic and BIPOC-focused media through co-publishing and translation partnerships.

We value the expertise of local residents and advocates

We partner with the community to identify information gaps

We bring big issues into a local context to make them understandable and relevant

While we do not engage in direct advocacy or promote particular policy positions, we do provide information to inform and inspire change. We help people understand complex problems and the solutions and opportunities they present. By connecting and empowering our community in this way, we impact environmental health and advance climate resilience.

Key Impacts



Our coverage raises voices of grassroots and impacted communities

Planet Detroit is addressing a critical gap in Southeast Michigan by providing comprehensive coverage of grassroots environmental issues with a focus on equity and justice.

Root Cause Focus

Our unique stories cover topics that other media outlets are not covering, and our reporters are knowledgeable and able to communicate complex issues in an accessible way. We work to connect the dots and explain how income and racial disparities interact with environmental and public health issues, which often get buried but are important to understand today's environmental challenges and solutions.



“Planet Detroit goes a cut deeper. They interrogate both mainstream and activist sources. By being rigorous they get to what's actually the root of it.”

Jackson Koeppel

Highland Park-based energy democracy consultant,
Planet Detroit Contributor

Grassroots Voices

Planet Detroit's reporters prioritize grassroots experiences and expertise, providing unique and valuable journalism that serves communities long neglected by legacy media. They center personal stories to demonstrate challenges related to environmental issues that intersect with quality of life. Planet Detroit has helped other news outlets spotlight local environmental news through innovative partnerships.

For example, nonprofit news outlet Next City, which promotes economic, environmental, and social justice in cities by sharing solutions and ideas across different urban areas, partnered with Planet Detroit to republish and co-publish multiple stories for this reason.



“Next City's collaboration with Planet Detroit has deepened our ability to report on environmental justice solutions for Black and Brown Michiganders. We are grateful to be able to work with Planet Detroit's adept and creative newsroom.”

Aysha Khan

Senior Editor, Next City

WHY OUR AUDIENCE READS PLANET DETROIT

Get up to speed on the local environmental and public health news headlines	90%
Learn about people and organizations in the city working on solutions to our challenges	82%
Get context on local issues and history	68%
Read original articles from Planet Detroit and partner newsrooms	65%
Find out about things to do in the city	41%
Learn about bad actors and hold them accountable	40%

Source: Audience survey, 2022

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"There have been articles that have provided depth to conversations I didn't know I needed in my immediate work. I frequently forward articles I read in Planet Detroit to convey, confirm, and inform."

Fai Foen
Greening of Detroit



We collaborate to extend capacity, build synergy

Through meaningful collaboration and cultivation of cross-sector partners, Planet Detroit has strengthened its reporting and expanded its reach and impact. Collaborations have been crucial for Planet Detroit to not just survive, but thrive as a topic-specific independent local news organization.

Media Amplification

Other media outlets co-publish and republish Planet Detroit's content to share vital information with their audiences, despite limited resources. Media partnerships not only strengthen the impact of the reporting but also help build a broader network of organizations and individuals committed to environmental justice.

When content appears in multiple media outlets, it has a greater chance of capturing public attention, leading to increased awareness, shared understanding of environmental issues, and potentially triggering people to take action and institutions to respond.

Select partnerships include:

- El Central Hispanic News, Michigan's only bilingual Hispanic media outlet, has collaborated with Planet Detroit to expand its coverage on environmental and neighborhood issues affecting Southwest Detroit residents and businesses. They have a digital publication as well as a weekly print newspaper. As part of the partnership, El Central has been translating and reprinting articles and resources, including Planet Detroit's Climate Guides.
- The environment is a critical issue for public radio station Michigan Radio's audience, consistently ranking in the top three issues of concern, alongside politics and education. Planet Detroit reporters are frequently featured on Michigan Radio's daily podcast, Stateside, to provide local insight on air pollution monitoring, fishing habits on Detroit's Riverwalk, and lead inspection rules for apartments.
- Once a month, Planet Detroit joins WDET, Detroit's NPR Station, on-air during their weekly Culture Shift show. Our expertise in environmental journalism and coverage of racial and social justice issues provide valuable insights to the conversation. This collaboration highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to complex issues intersecting with the environment and social justice.



“With Planet Detroit, BridgeDetroit has been able to build on our environmental coverage and expertise.”

Christine Ferretti
BridgeDetroit

Media Network Collaborations

In addition to media amplification partnerships, Planet Detroit is actively involved in various local and national media networks. These networks provide opportunities to share resources, learn from other organizations, and collaborate on larger projects that benefit the community.

Highlights include:

- Planet Detroit has been actively growing its partnership with the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), which provides a range of support services to members to benefit public-service and investigative journalism. We played a significant role as editorial lead on a reporting project to produce "[Climate collaboration examines resilience across Great Lakes cities](#)" with four other newsrooms.
- Planet Detroit participates in a local collaborative editorial group with nonprofit media partners that meets monthly to share practices and advance sustainability led by Outlier Media. Collaborators include Michigan Radio, Metro Times, WDET, WXYZ, and Detroit Free Press. The group considers and tests ideas, and as a smaller and more agile organization, Planet Detroit helps to provide proof of concept for larger organizations that can be more difficult to steer in new directions, said Sarah Hulett of Michigan Radio.



“We have been able to cover ground-level issues in Black communities in a way that would have been much more difficult otherwise. We have also been able to republish coverage of Michigan energy issues despite not having dedicated funding to cover the state.”

Ken Paulman
Energy News Network

Community Partnerships

Planet Detroit has established reciprocal relationships with cross-sector community partners, including individuals, residents, and nonprofits. These partnerships enable Planet Detroit to better understand the needs and concerns of the community.

A few examples include:

- Highland Park nonprofit Soulardarity's work in advocating for energy democracy and community-owned renewable energy is complex and technical. Still, Planet Detroit has made crucial information accessible to its readers. Soulardarity Director of Programs Rafael Mojica says, **"Planet Detroit has been a great partner for us. As an organization doing fight work, we need to be able to tell our story, and they help us do that through their solutions reporting. Our partnership is grounded in trust, and we appreciate Planet Detroit's consistency in sticking to its mission — there's no second-guessing their motivations."**
- Nicholas Leonard, Executive Director at the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center, has used Planet Detroit's reporting to increase awareness and knowledge on their issues and support their advocacy efforts. The Center works with communities impacted by racism and economic discrimination to utilize the power of the law to create effective strategies to hold polluters and government agencies accountable. The Center and Planet Detroit have a collaborative partnership wherein they reach out to Planet Detroit and vice versa: **"Planet Detroit's reporters are accessible, and we're able to get their attention on certain things. We can consistently rely on Planet Detroit to highlight issues of importance and to highlight the connected work we're doing."**
- Planet Detroit has cultivated a network of locally rooted organizations and businesses that support community-powered, independent nonprofit journalism known as Impact Partners. Through sponsorship and in-kind donations, Impact Partners help keep coverage free and accessible to all, especially those most impacted by the issues we cover.



"Planet Detroit always puts their best effort forth to get the information out and also provide a solution for the problems that I've been having in zip code 48209."

Thomasenia Weston,
Resident & Planet Detroit reader and source



Focused on growing representation in journalism

Planet Detroit is dedicated to promoting representation in journalism through partnerships that identify, train, and mentor journalists who are from the communities impacted by environmental harm or committed to environmental journalism that centers grassroots perspectives.

In 2019, the Energy News Network and the Detroit Equity Action Lab at Wayne State University first established the Detroit Energy and Environment Reporting Fellowship program to assist journalists of color in investigating how energy issues are affecting their communities. Planet Detroit joined the initiative in 2021. The program received further support from The Kresge Foundation in 2022 to continue its mission. Planet Detroit has welcomed three fellows: Rukiya Colvin, Eleanore Catolico, and Angela Lugo-Thomas. Through the program, fellows gain expertise on the environmental justice topics and receive mentorship and editorial help while pursuing stories that are of interest to them.

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“Being able to report for Planet Detroit has felt full circle for me. As a young child, I wanted to be a news reporter. I have always enjoyed talking to people and learning more about different things. My friends jokingly call me Barbara Walters because every time I meet someone or talk to someone I have not seen in a long time, I get all kinds of information out of them by asking them questions.

Now, I get to do that in the community that I live in and was raised in with people I know and many that I am learning about. I am cautious to not come across as only there to get the story. I truly care about what is happening in the neighborhoods in Detroit, Highland Park and Hamtramck.

Sharing their stories in Planet Detroit is fulfilling in ways I never imagined. It is certainly allowing me to expand my knowledge base and continue to do the community engagement I have done for 20 years. I feel privileged that I am able to document history by documenting these stories in Planet Detroit and I feel that opportunities to do that should be extended to more people in the community.”

Angela Lugo-Thomas

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“The fellowship helped boost my knowledge of environmental justice issues, the climate crisis, and the clean energy transition. I also improved my skills as a reporter and writer as I faced the challenges of explaining these often complicated and technical concepts to readers.

I am forever grateful for the time I spent working under accomplished editors Nina Ignaczak and Ken Paulman and appreciate their efforts to cultivate a safe and supportive newsroom space for journalists of color like myself. I am driven to continue to report on one of the greatest societal issues of our time, the climate crisis and its ongoing impact on communities of color.”

Eleanore Catalico

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“Working with Planet Detroit has allowed me opportunity with other publications, notoriety among other professionals which has led to other opportunities. I also see it as an opportunity to bridge communication with my community to local news that I see as important.”

Rukiya Colvin

In addition, Planet Detroit works with partners like the Detroit River Story Lab at the University of Michigan to support their efforts to reconnect communities to the river and its stories while providing student opportunities. Planet Detroit facilitates students in learning new skills and gaining experience through mentorship and relationship building through connections, mentorship, and reporting. 2021 intern Patricia Jewell provided a series of oral histories about local Detroiters' stories and memories of the river, including conversations on environmental stewardship, transit and water, and the power of water from an Anishinaabe perspective.

David Porter, who leads the Lab expresses how the program's been **“very grateful for placement opportunities for our students, who have been inspired by Planet Detroit's model of community-based, nonprofit environmental journalism.”**

We continue to explore future collaborations, such as an academic engagement where students develop journalism pitches for a long-form story, and an in-person training program for aspiring community journalists who are Detroit residents. In partnership with Cleveland's The Land, Planet Detroit initiated an inaugural "Reporting from Where We Live" class in 2023 to train four local residents who want to write about their neighborhoods, local government, civic issues, and more. They include Malikah Shabazz, a Detroit-born filmmaker; Maddie Boyer, an engineer working and living in the city of Detroit; Valaurian Waller, a native Detroiter and documentary photographer; and Cheri Hollie, recent Wayne State graduate, and Michelle Jones, a Highland Park grandmother and advocate with Soulardarity.



“I read Planet Detroit to hear about local efforts and educate myself better. To see how I can help make change.”

Reader Feedback

TOPICS OUR READERS CARE ABOUT	
Climate Solutions & Resilience	82%
Environmental Health	70%
Clean Energy Industry	70%
Politics & Policy	69%
Environmental Justice	64%
Food & Agriculture	62%
Biodiversity & Natural Resources	59%
Fossil Fuel Industry	46%
Sustainable Business	42%

Source: Audience survey, 2022



“Planet Detroit provides the kind of reporting Detroit needs during this time of change and economic development.”

Reader Feedback

Impact Stories



Over the last four years, Planet Detroit has reported time and again on some of the same topic areas, keeping readers informed about ongoing challenges, holding key players accountable, spotlighting solutions, and empowering the community. The vignettes that follow provide examples of how our approach to accountability, solutions-based, and community service journalism rounds out our coverage over time.

Holding Energy Utilities Accountable



As energy providers, local utility companies have a responsibility to provide essential services to the public, and journalists play a critical role in ensuring the companies operate ethically and in the best interests of the community. Over the last four years, Planet Detroit has published dozens of stories about Michigan's energy utilities, and in particular about DTE Energy, which serves 2.2 million customers in Southeast Michigan.

Our coverage has **held DTE Energy accountable** for its lack of

adequate action in response to climate change, for its record of shut-offs and unaffordable rates that disproportionately affect low-income households, for its investments in harmful fossil fuel infrastructure, and its political and public relations spending.

"Planet Detroit's reporting helps highlight issues with our MI utilities and spread the message of the need for utility accountability for Michigan residents."

Amy Bandyk, Citizens Utility Board

Planet Detroit has also published stories that explore possible solutions for residents to reduce their reliance on utilities like DTE Energy. For example, we wrote about a bipartisan bill package in the Michigan legislature that would enable community solar projects in the state. The bills would increase access to renewable energy, reduce electricity costs, and create local jobs. We also examined energy security in Highland Park and Adjuntas, Puerto Rico, two communities with movements to pursue energy independence and resilience. We highlight the importance of decentralized energy systems and the role they play in ensuring energy security, particularly in vulnerable communities, and we spotlight innovative approaches taken by these communities to build a more sustainable and resilient future.

Through our approach to **community service journalism**, we have also published easy-to-understand information and guides to promote consumer empowerment in the face of utility rate hikes, and rate changes.

Further, we have uplifted community voices and provided diverse perspectives through opinion pieces that encourage

debate and discussion, influence decision makers, raise awareness, promote accountability, and foster transparency about utility companies political spending, and rates and reliability.

Our comprehensive coverage has **increased awareness** of DTE Energy's policies and practices at a time when severe weather and inadequate infrastructure has led to widespread power outages across the region. The impact has been further amplified by media partners such as Energy News Network, which has republished more than 20 of Planet Detroit's utility company stories, reaching over 25,000 readers beyond Planet Detroit's audience.

"We have used stories from Planet Detroit in a number of our newsletters, social media and membership communications. It provides excellent focus on environmental issues going on in SE Michigan that other media outlets aren't really picking up. We've also done our own press outreach via pitches and press releases using hooks from stories that Planet Detroit broke, especially on utility accountability and other polluter accountability in SE Michigan."

Nick Dodge

Communications Director at the Michigan League of Conservation Voters, Planet Detroit Impact Partner

Our reporting on utility companies has also provided valuable tools for environmental advocacy groups and leaders to use in support of their work, whether in campaign materials, membership appeals, or advocacy efforts.

In two instances, **our reporting was used to support direct political action.** In December 2022, a Planet Detroit story republished by Energy News Network was cited in testimony at the Minnesota Public Utilities Coalition. The story reported on the Michigan Public Service Commission's rejection of most of DTE Energy's requested rate increase after requesting community input for the first time. The testimony provided in Minnesota was in opposition to the local utilities requested rate increase.

In a second instance, Planet Detroit published a story in January, 2023 exposing ties between a DTE-linked dark money group and the group behind the effort to repeal Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's emergency order powers during the pandemic. The story followed an earlier opinion piece on concerns over DTE Energy's political spending. One month later, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel filed comments at the Michigan Public Service Commission requesting more transparency on lobbying influence by utility companies.

Planet Detroit's reporting on DTE Energy won a first-place award from the Society of Professional Journalists Detroit Chapter for Consumer/Watchdog Investigative Reporting)



Links Between Pollution and Health in Southwest Detroit



Southwest Detroit residents face numerous pollution issues due to a combination of factors, including heavy industry, transportation infrastructure, and historical land-use decisions. The area is heavily industrialized with automotive manufacturers, steel production, and a petroleum refinery contributing to heavy air, water, and land pollution. The area's role as a transportation hub further exacerbates air pollution from

vehicle emissions, and leads to noise and traffic congestion. Past zoning and land-use decisions have resulted in the close proximity of industrial facilities and residential neighborhoods, placing residents at a higher risk of exposure to pollutants.

The community consists mainly of low-income and BIPOC populations, who historically bear a disproportionate burden of

pollution and its associated health risks. Pollution in the area has been linked to various health issues, such as respiratory illnesses, heart disease, and cancer.

Planet Detroit's coverage in Southwest Detroit has been wide ranging, but a frequent subject is the Moroun family, who own significant industrial and transportation assets in the area, and have been widely criticized for their role in contributing to the pollution problem. **Planet Detroit's reporting holds influential stakeholders like the Moroun family accountable** to minimizing pollution from their assets.

We have reported on ongoing efforts in Southwest Detroit to advocate for a truck route ordinance to keep diesel trucks off of residential streets, on the Moroun family's control of riverfront property and on a deal with the City of Detroit to transfer land to the Moroun-owned Detroit International Bridge Company, which would enable it to build a second span of the Ambassador Bridge over the Detroit River. Residents argue this will lead to further pollution in the community, among other negative impacts.

Our stories have also highlighted solutions proposed by advocacy groups and legislators to introduce bills that would account for the cumulative impacts of pollution and hold polluters accountable.

At the same time, we have provided Southwest Detroit residents dealing with pollution issues valuable information, resources, and guidance that empowers them to take action and make informed decisions. Our 2020 profile of Michelle Martinez reports on how the environmental justice activist and advocate has used community organizing and resilience-building strategies to foster a sense of community and collective action to address pollution issues. Our informational story on a new EPA rule that aims to cut heavy-duty truck emissions by 80% provides context along with practical, actionable information and resources about the impacts of truck emissions.

To amplify this issue, we partnered with Michigan Radio to produce a guide alongside their story highlighting a community effort to monitor air quality in Detroit. Our detailed air quality guide helps readers understand why some

people are disproportionately affected by air pollution, how climate change will affect our air quality, and what actions can help effect change.

Finally, Planet Detroit has published opinion pieces written by local advocates that encourage the formation of an environmental justice coalition in Southwest Detroit, and encourage action by the transportation sector to reduce air pollution in Detroit.

Planet Detroit's coverage of environmental and health concerns in Southwest Detroit has **raised awareness across the community on the issues impacting residents' everyday lives**. Because Southwest Detroit has a large Spanish speaking population, Planet Detroit partnered with Spanish-English language publication, *El Central* to translate and republish its stories.

"El Central has been able to offer to our readers more in-depth analysis of issues such as air and water pollution, congestion caused by heavy truck traffic throughout the neighborhoods, etc."

Rob Dewaulsche
El Central Media

"I report on the climate crisis, environmental justice and politics. I'm trying to show how power functions in society and how efforts to create systemic change can create better outcomes for people and ecosystems."

Brian Allnutt
Planet Detroit Reporter

Our coverage on this topic has also been used in support of **community actions**. In 2023, Planet Detroit reported on resident concerns over unpermitted activities at a Moroun-owned lot that is zoned residential. The lot has been used as a de-facto green space by the community, when the company installed barbed wire and removed all the trees. After Planet Detroit's story ran, residents informed our reporter that the company had taken down the barbed wire surrounding the lot and had moved a semi-trailer that had been parked on the residential lot. The story was later referenced during a City Council debate on the Ambassador Bridge land deal mentioned above when Councilmember Gabriela Santiago-Romero referred to unpermitted activity on a Moroun-owned residential parcel.

At the Intersection of Justice, Nature, and Outdoor Recreation



The connection between engaging with nature, outdoor recreation, and equity and justice is traced back to historical practices and policies that have shaped access to green spaces and outdoor experiences for different communities. In Detroit and surrounding communities, a history of segregation, redlining, the disproportionate distribution of public resources to wealthy, white communities, and the dominance of middle-income, white people in

environmental movements and outdoor spaces has had long-lasting effects on the availability and quality of green spaces for BIPOC and low income communities.

Planet Detroit's reporting on this topic aims to promote equitable access to nature and outdoor recreation as a matter of justice, and work towards creating inclusive and diverse spaces that benefit all communities.

Our stories on efforts to increase representation and access for BIPOC and underrepresented Michiganders **hold leaders and organizations accountable for their roles in perpetuating historical inequities in outdoor spaces, while also uplifting local voices and the solutions they seek.** For example, in response to the National Audubon Society's decision to continue using John James Audubon's name, despite him having been a slave owner and eugenicist, we wrote about the local Detroit Audubon chapter's response and their own consideration of a name change. The story includes local perspectives on the national organization's unpopular decision.

"Planet Detroit's reporting helps raise awareness about issues that I'm working on (e.g. energy, justice, habitat conservation). It makes me a more informed advocate, validates my work, and helps to bring others to the cause."

Diane Checklich

Director & Chair of Conservation Committee, Detroit Audubon

Likewise, our story about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts within local environmental and recreation organizations considers

a national push to address structural racism, improve racial diversity within organizations, and create more inclusive environments within the context of Southeast Michigan.

"Planet Detroit helps me understand how national and global issues like climate change, energy, public health, and toxic pollution are inextricably connected to what is happening in Detroit and our local region; facts drive public education, engagement, and accountability. I care most about issues of environmental, racial, and social justice, and Planet Detroit sheds light on the communities and organizations at the heart of these issues."

Reader feedback

We've highlighted community-led solutions and our media partnerships have helped amplify them. In 2022, through our Equitable Cities Reporting Hub for Environmental Justice, an initiative led by Grist and Next City, we shined a light on Black-led organizations that are helping to eliminate obstacles to people of color accessing nature.

Reporter Rukiya Colvin was a [guest on Michigan Radio's Stateside](#) along with April Campbell, founder of BIPOC Birders of Michigan to talk about her and other leaders' efforts to increase access to nature and outdoor recreation. Stateside also amplified our story about [anglers on Detroit's riverfront](#), inviting writer Zaire Daniels on the show to talk about [his story on the topic](#).

Our 2021 short film "[Forty Gallons](#)" featured an initiative to establish a sugarbush in Detroit's Rouge Park and provide the experience of maple sugaring to Detroit Youth, it own a first place award in videography from the Society for Professional Journalists' Detroit chapter and screened at the 2022 Freep Film Festival in Detroit and the Fresh Coast Film Festival in Marquette.

Finally, our 2023 film [Claiming Connections](#), produced in partnership with Reel Clever Studios further showcases local efforts to increase access and introduce more BIPOC residents to outdoor recreation opportunities, bringing the topic to our audience in a different format.

Our extensive 24-part [Parks Reports](#) Instagram series provided informative, educational content to

community members on the amenities and conditions of Detroit's parks, the stories showcase people that journalist Zaire Daniels meets at the park, providing visibility to community members utilizing their local public outdoor spaces. Daniels posted about his park visits each week on Planet Detroit's Instagram at [#detroitparkspathfinder](#).



Other examples of informational guides and stories include a story about [connecting residents to nighttime birding](#), a [history of Detroit's parks](#), the [Detroit Zoo's involvement](#) in habitat restoration in Detroit, and a new [City of Detroit parks and recreation plan](#) that aims to improve access.

Southeast Michigan's active environmental justice movement has brought attention to the inequitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, and led to increased awareness and advocacy for equitable access to nature and outdoor recreation as essential components of community well-being, public health, and social justice.

"The reporting has improved our awareness of the important issues in water and nature. We forward our thoughts to our community to make them aware of reasons why we teach catch and release and healthy eating."

David & Tracey Webb
We Fixin to Fish

Planet Detroit's coverage has lifted community perspectives, increased awareness of these activities, and promoted inclusive, safe, healthy access to outdoor spaces.



Local, State & Federal Opportunities and Solutions to Address Climate Change



Historically, addressing climate change in Metro Detroit has been a complex and challenging endeavor due to the region's industrial heritage and reliance on the automotive industry. For decades, the city has been a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, with its numerous factories and automobile

production facilities. However, in recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for action to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts. Local initiatives, such as the adoption of green infrastructure, promotion of public transportation, and support for renewable energy projects, have emerged in response to these

concerns. At the state level, Michigan has implemented policies to reduce emissions and increase the use of clean energy, but progress has been slow and often met with opposition from various stakeholders. On the federal level, the U.S. government's approach to climate change has varied significantly depending on the administration in power, with periods of both strong action and inaction. Overall, addressing climate change in Metro Detroit has been a multifaceted process, involving local, state, and federal efforts that have produced a mix of successes and setbacks in the ongoing struggle to reduce emissions and adapt to the changing climate.

Planet Detroit's reporting has raised awareness and spotlighted calls for government actions and policies to address climate change.

In 2021, we published a story discussing a research study that [predicts a potential combined heatwave and blackout event in Detroit](#), which could have severe consequences due to the city's aging infrastructure, high poverty rates, and a lack of preparedness

for extreme weather events. The story raises awareness of the importance of addressing these issues and implementing measures to mitigate the potential impacts of such an event. Now two years later, the story remains relevant. At a community meeting in 2023 held by Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib in response to widespread power outages in DTE's service area, a local advocate from We the People of Michigan cited Planet Detroit's article in her comments.

In a story about [the importance of updating Michigan's building code](#) as a key factor in meeting climate goals, Planet Detroit highlighted the benefits of adopting sustainable building practices, such as incorporating renewable energy systems and enhancing insulation and ventilation standards.

Our story about the [historic opportunity that Michigan has to take action on climate change](#), further highlights the urgency of addressing climate issues and encourages Michigan's leaders and policymakers to prioritize climate action by implementing ambitious plans, investing in clean energy infrastructure, and engaging in collaborative efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

We have also reported on innovative initiatives, such as the Resilient Homes Michigan Coalition's [proposal for a \\$1.5 billion plan](#) aimed at addressing Michigan's aging housing stock, improving public health, and combating climate change. Our story underscores the significance of investing in sustainable housing solutions as a means to promote environmental sustainability, public health, and economic growth in Michigan.

"I read Planet Detroit because I am concerned about climate change and want to know how Michigan is working to shift their energy to renewable sources and what we can do to help."

Reader feedback

Planet Detroit has also published a series of guides and informational stories aimed at providing practical information, resources, and support that empower individuals, communities, and organizations to take action. We have explored the way [climate change affects human health](#) and urged individuals, communities, and policymakers to prioritize climate action to safeguard public health and mitigate the negative effects of climate change. We provided an [overview of climate resilience](#) and its significance in the face of climate change, emphasizing that investing in climate resilience is crucial for minimizing the risks and damages associated with climate change and ensuring the long-term sustainability of communities and ecosystems. We also produced an [environmental voters guide](#) and a guide to the [2022 Inflation Reduction Act](#).

Water Affordability and Shutoffs



Detroit's water affordability and shutoff challenges stem from a combination of factors, including aging infrastructure, economic decline, high poverty rates, and inadequate assistance programs. The city's outdated water and sewerage systems result in higher maintenance and operating costs, which are often passed on to consumers through increased water rates. Detroit's struggling economy and high poverty rates make it difficult for many residents to afford water services, leading to widespread shutoffs that

disproportionately affect low-income residents and communities of color. Assistance programs have been criticized as insufficient and difficult to access, exacerbating the problem. These factors have created a complex and persistent challenge for Detroit, highlighting the need for comprehensive, long-term solutions to ensure access to clean, affordable water for all residents.

Planet Detroit has reported extensively on water affordability issues in Metro Detroit, particularly

regarding water shutoffs during the pandemic and ongoing efforts to stop them. A few examples are mentioned here. We wrote about the impact water shutoffs have on public health in Detroit during the pandemic and emphasized long term solutions to ensure water access as a basic human right and advocates for a more equitable and sustainable water system in Detroit. We wrote about efforts to reduce shutoffs by the City of Detroit and community demands for more comprehensive state and federal solutions. We lifted up the voices of faith leaders who argued that water is a basic human right and that denying access to clean and affordable water is a moral crisis. Finally, Planet Detroit also published a story on the need for state intervention to address water affordability in Detroit about organizers who argue that while the city has implemented various programs to assist struggling residents, a comprehensive and sustainable solution requires broader action at the state level.

We also ran several opinion pieces on the topic, including a piece arguing for water as a human right, a piece about Detroit's proposed water affordability plan needing to address root causes to be more effective, and history and context

for the water affordability crisis in Highland Park.

Finally, we also produced a guide to understanding your water utility, and a guide exploring how climate change will impact water affordability.

During the pandemic was used by the League of Conservation Voters to amplify the issue to their audience, including lawmakers. Our reporting provided important context for a conversation they hosted with Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib on the topic. Our reporting on this issue has centered community voices and informed residents, organizations, and legislators on the importance of safe, affordable water access.

"I've used Planet Detroit's reporting to amplify my work, and share issues with others."

Safe Water Engineering
Elin Betanzo

Our Audience

Planet Detroit readers care about their communities.

Our readers:

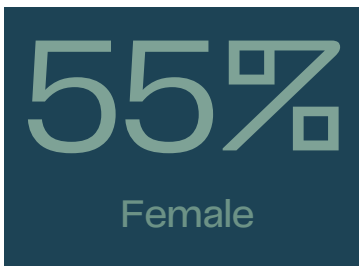
- Volunteer for or donate to environmental causes
- Purchase products from local and organic purveyors
- Vote for environmentally-focused candidates and initiatives
- Take steps to reduce waste and green their households

Our readers are...



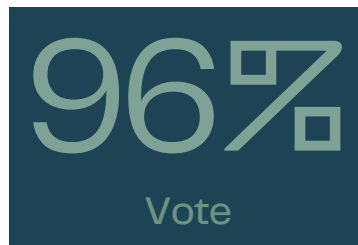
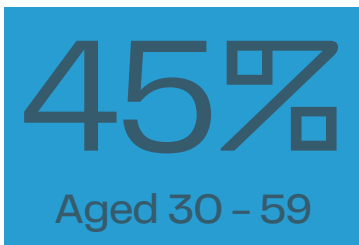
6,700+

Total newsletter subscribers



8,000+

Average monthly visits to planetdetroit.com



20,000+

Social media followers



2,500 Twitter Followers



14,600 Facebook Followers



5,700 Instagram Followers

Recognition

Planet Detroit has been recognized locally and nationally for our commitment to quality environmental journalism.

Here are a few highlights:



Institute for Nonprofit News 2023 Emerging Leaders Council

The program supports diverse news leaders who will innovate and grow the nonprofit news field.

Honored by the Michigan League of Conservation Voters at their 10th Annual Gala in 2022.

This recognition highlighted Planet Detroit's dedication to elevating awareness about environmental justice in the state.

Planet Detroit's award-winning film "Forty Gallons" was featured at the 2022 Freshcoast Film Festival in Marquette as well as at the Freep Film Fest 2022.

The film is a testament to Planet Detroit's dedication to telling important and impactful stories about individuals and groups making change in Detroit.



Seven first-place awards for our reporting in 2022 at the Society of Professional Journalists–Detroit.

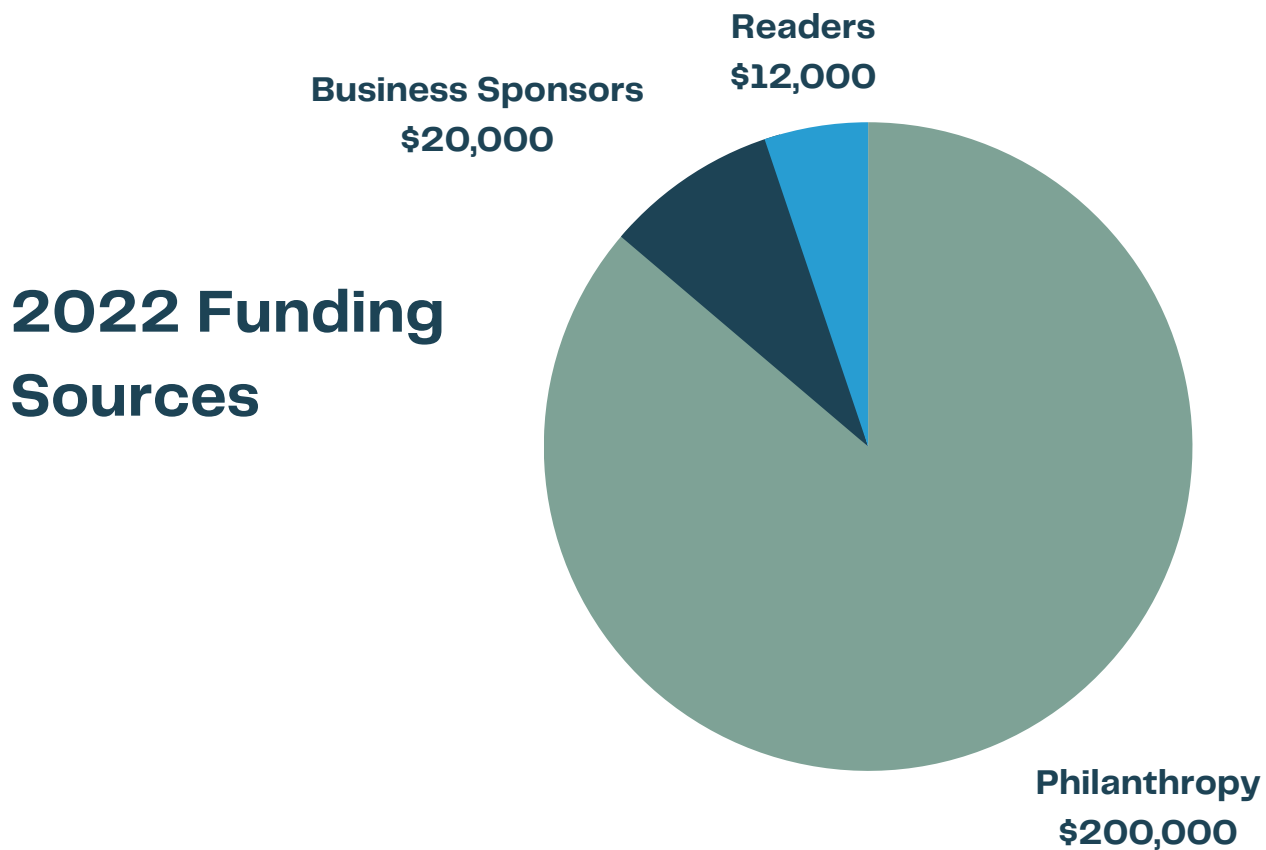
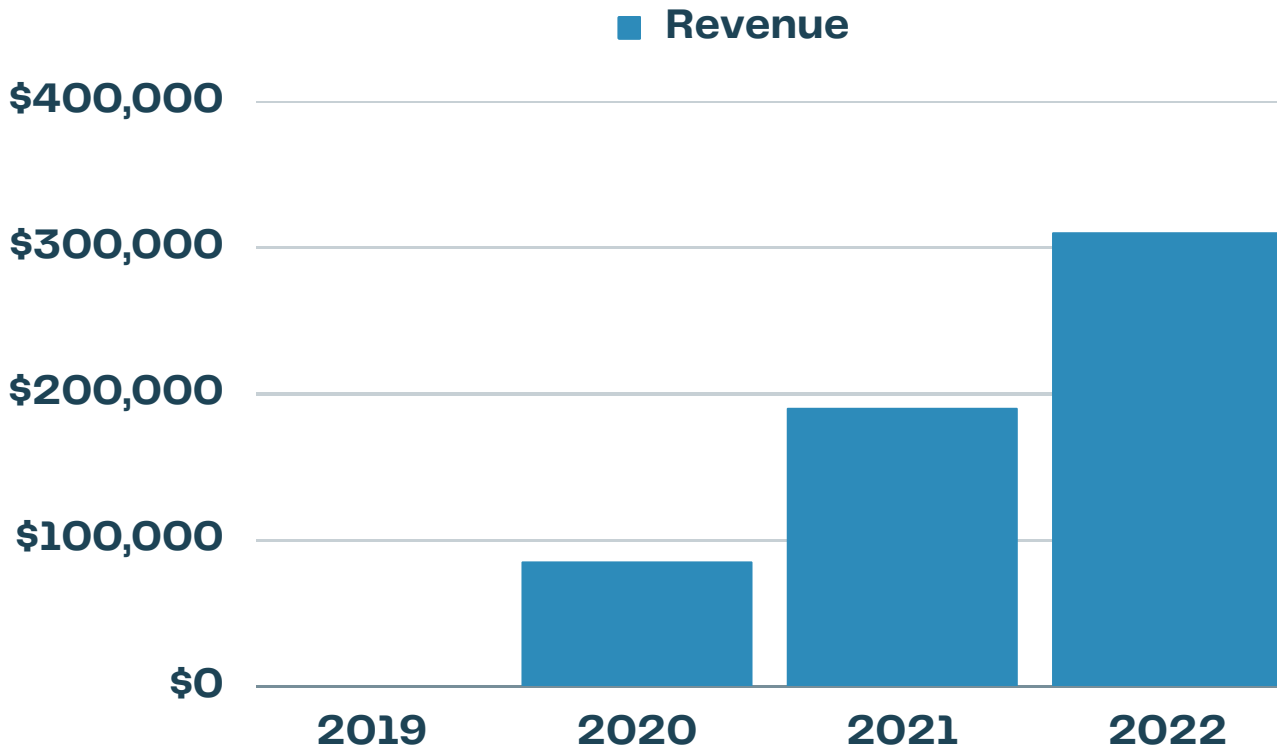
SPJ awarded Planet Detroit first-place accolades for Newsletter strategy, Racial Justice Reporting, Engagement-driven coverage, Consumer/Watchdog Investigative Reporting, and Explanatory Story, and Environment Reporting. Planet Detroit received additional awards in Environment Reporting and Local News Reporting. In 2021, Planet Detroit received four awards from SPJ. This recognition highlights Planet Detroit's commitment to delivering high-quality journalism and providing valuable information to its audience.

Finalist in the 2022 Local Independent Online News (LION) Publishers awards for its community engagement work around its climate guides.

Planet Detroit was also recognized at the 2022 LION Publishers annual conference in Austin, Texas.

Financials

Our revenue is rising with our impact



Acknowledgements

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Advisory Board

- Martina Guzman, Board Chair & Cofounder
- Sarah Alvarez, Founder, Outlier Media
- Emilia Askari, University of Michigan Journalism Instructor
- Erika Block, Sticky Lab
- Laprishia Berry Daniels, Executive Director, Detroiters Working For Environmental Justice
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- Tim Skrotzki, Senior Market Development Lead For Elevate
- Leslie Tom, Chief Sustainability Officer At The Charles H. Wright Museum Of African American History.

Impact Partners

- 5 Lakes Energy
- Asti Environmental
- Detroit 2030 District
- Detroiters Working For Environmental Justice
- Friends Of The Rouge
- Early Works
- Ecology Center
- EcoWorks
- Elevate
- Greening Of Detroit
- Great Lakes Environmental Law Center
- Huron-Clinton Metroparks
- Huron River Watershed Council
- Make Food Not Waste
- MI Climate Action Network
- Michigan Clinicians For Climate Action
- Mi Environmental Justice Coalition
- Michigan League Of Conservation Voters
- Restoration 1
- Six Rivers Land Conservancy
- Society Of Environmental Journalists
- Sticky Lab
- Taste The Local Difference
- The Work Department
- Trent Creative
- Walker Miller Energy Services

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- American Press Institute
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- Google News Initiative News Equity Fund
- Google Sustainable Publishing Solutions
- Institute for Nonprofit News
- Joyce Foundation
- Knight Foundation
- Kresge Foundation
- LION Publishers
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- Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs
- Michigan Health Endowment Fund
- Michigan Humanities Council
- NewsMatch
- Porter Family Foundation
- Rotary Club of Detroit
- Rita Davis Foundation
- Solutions Journalism Network

Media Partners and Collaborators

- BELT Magazine
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- Latino Press
- Local Media Association Covering Climate Collaborative
- Metro Times
- Michigan Radio
- Outlier Media
- The Detroit Free Press
- Tostada Magazine
- WDET 101.9 FM



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