



# SOULARDARITY

Organizing for Infrastructure

Highland Park, MI

**In 2011, over 1000 of Highland Park's streetlights were repossessed by DTE Energy** due to the non-payment of a \$60,000/month electrical bill which had accrued **\$4 million of electric debt**. Though some lights were replaced at intersections and Woodward Avenue remained lit by the State of Michigan, **nearly every residential street was left in the dark**. People feel unsafe in their communities. Bills run high for those willing to keep their porch lights on in the evening. Businesses are stymied by the darkness.



**Soulardarity is committed to installing 200 solar-powered streetlights in Highland Park - planned and owned by Highland Parkers.** Off-grid solar lights are reliable, affordable, and will shine even in grid failure. A planning process driven by Highland Park residents means a lighting plan designed for the needs of the people. Cooperative ownership will ensure that the lights will be maintained and protected for decades to come, and help to tackle bigger infrastructure issues.



Soulardarity launched with the funding and installation of Highland Park's first solar-powered streetlight in September of 2012. The light was installed in front of a locally-owned garage at 150 Victor St - just a block south of the original Model-T Plant. In the two years that followed, Soulardarity has engaged in deep community outreach and coalition building throughout the city. The second streetlight installation at Jakobi RA Park marks the beginning of the next phase of the project - expanding across the city.

**In 2015, Soulardarity is launching the community cooperative which will own the streetlights and facilitating the installation of 20 more streetlights in resident-identified areas of need in Highland Park.** See the FAQ on the backside of this sheet for more information on the project and how to get involved.

**Let's shine a light on Highland Park.**



## —Frequently Asked Questions—

### **How does a solar streetlight work and how much does one cost?**

The photovoltaic models (solar panels) mounted on top of the pole capture solar radiation during the day and transform it into electricity, which is then stored in the battery bank. When the sun goes down, a sensor notes that there is no more energy coming into the PV modules and turns on the LED lamp head. The lamp draws energy from the battery bank over the course of the night, which is refilled by the sun the next day. A single streetlight can run between \$5,000 and \$10,000 depending on the models. The lights we have installed so far cost about \$6500 each with installation costs included.

### **Does solar work in Michigan?**

Michigan gets an average of 4.5 hours of direct sunlight each day. This means that a 1 kilowatt (kW) solar panel installation will generate an average 4.5 kW of energy each day over a year. There is less solar irradiation available during the winter due to shorter and cloudier days, which is why the solar streetlights we are installing have a large battery bank and a high-efficiency LED that will function through the winter. Solar panels actually run more efficiently at lower temperatures, so one cold clear day can fully recharge the battery bank.

### **How does cooperative ownership work?**

Cooperatives are democratic, membership-based organizations that give power to the people through shared ownership. Co-op Boards are democratically elected on a 1-member-1-vote basis. This cooperative will have different tiers for individuals, unofficial groups like families and block clubs, businesses, and other organizations. The organization will be sustained through membership dues, which will be as low as \$5 a year for an individual. Everything owned by the cooperative is directly owned by its members, so each member of the community cooperative shares ownership of the entire streetlight system.

### **How do I get a streetlight on my block?**

We recommend coming to one of the **monthly community dinners** - held the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm at Nandi's Knowledge Cafe - 12511 Woodward Avenue - to learn more, connect with project leaders, and nominate streetlight locations.

We are currently looking for sites for 20 streetlights to be installed in the Summer of 2015. You can also contact us through the website to nominate a location: <http://tinyurl.com/SoulardarityContact>

### **How can I get involved?**

Starting in September of 2014, Soulardarity is convening three committees which will meet and coordinate their work according to their membership.

**Outreach Committee** - Spreading the word about community dinners, trainings, events, presentations and other relevant updates to the Highland Park community.

**Installation Committee** - Selecting locations, planning and implementing streetlight installations throughout the city. This committee will be focused the goal of installing 20 more lights in 2015.

**Cooperative Committee** - Working with professionals and community members to develop, establish, and build membership of the community cooperative that will own the streetlights, launching in 2015.

**Check our calendar - <http://tinyurl.com/SoulardarityCalendar> - for up-to-date information on committee meetings and agendas.**