



## Impact 100 Metro Detroit 2018 Grant Summary

Grant Finalist: **Soulardarity**

Project: **We LIT: Brighter Days in the Hood**

**Background:** Soulardarity was formed to advocate for community-owned solar streetlights after Highland Park was left in the dark, following the 2011 repossession of over 1000 streetlights by DTE Energy. Since that time, we have installed six solar lights, launched a solar bulk buying program, and led education and advocacy efforts based on energy democracy, the idea that people impacted by energy decisions should be the ones making them. Soulardarity is a democratic membership 501c3, governed and led by Highland Parkers. Our leadership is in the process of taking our local work in Highland Park to a new level: building out a powerful plan for equitable and sustainable development in Highland Park - led by Highland Parkers.

Our partnership with Avalon Village started in 2014 when we worked with Shu Harris to put up our second streetlight at Jakobi Ra Park, which she built in honor of her late son who was killed by a hit and run driver. The light was installed on Jakobi's birthday in August. Since it went up, Avalon Village has grown tremendously, turning the love Shu has for her neighbors and community into a powerful sustainable development effort grounded in the needs and visions of the community - Avalon Village.

**Unmet Need:** The following needs are addressed through this program:

- Lighting for neighborhood safety and security
- Free internet access for neighborhood
- Creating more beauty and order
- Enhancing community pride
- Stimulating green and affordable solutions in the City of Highland Park

**Project Summary:** We are requesting funding for We LIT. We intend to provide community-owned solar powered lighting and free internet services to Avalon Village, an eco-village located in Highland Park, MI which serves children, elders and small businesses. We LIT is a collaboration between Soulardarity and Avalon Village, two organizations that have been concerned with building healthier and safer communities. This funding will provide for 6 state-of-the-art, Michigan-made, low-to-no-maintenance smart solar streetlights and community education on the services they provide.

**Outcome:** The project success will be defined by increased feeling of security and safety in our community, students improving academic confidence and performance due to internet access, residents of Avalon Village using the free internet service, new people and opportunities coming to Avalon Village, and the aesthetic improvement from the streetlights creating hope for Avalon Village residents and Highland Parkers.

**Sustainability:** The smart lights allow for minimal year-to-year maintenance due to the possibility of electronic monitoring. The main costs will be the ongoing provision of internet services, the replacement of batteries roughly every 10 years, and insurance. These costs can be easily paid for through revenue from Avalon Village activities. Soulardarity will collaborate with Avalon Village on an annual fundraiser to cover these costs.