

Impact 100 Metro Detroit Grant Summary  
Grant Finalist: **Freedom House Detroit (FHD)**  
Project: **FreedomLives: Out Front Project**

**Background:** The mission of Freedom House Detroit is to support and empower asylum seekers on their journey to safety, security, and freedom by providing comprehensive services in an inclusive and welcoming space. FHD operates five main programs:

- FreedomLives is the primary program upon which all others hinge. It delivers shelter, food, clothing, social network development, access to off-site recreation, k-12 school enrollment, transportation, and housing planning. With a grant from Impact100 Metro Detroit, the FreedomLives: Out Front Project will expand the shelter's recreation areas and improve community safety and aesthetics.
- FreedomAids guides clients through the asylum application, work authorization, asylum interview, family reunification, and change of status petition processes. The legal team accompanies every client to their Chicago asylum interview, delivering critical moral support and legal advocacy.
- FreedomCares delivers medical and mental health care coordination, including transportation, selecting a care provider, scheduling appointments and, when needed, accompanying clients to their appointments and arranging for interpreters. FHD partner Wayne State University Global Health Alliance delivers healthcare education.
- FreedomWorks delivers pre-employment services coordination, including access to English as Second Language classes, financial literacy training, professional acculturation experiences, and resume design, job searching, and interview coaching.
- FreedomTalks delivers global perspectives, experiential education, and issue expertise to the general public.

**Unmet Need: FHD operates in** Southwest Detroit which is 57% Latinx and a cultural and community gem struggling to break free from crime, unemployment, low-incomes, and low-education. More than 50% of its children live in poverty; 29% of households earn less than \$15,000/year; 46% of +25 year-olds do not have high school diplomas; 20% of homes are vacant; and about 59 crimes occur/1,000 residents.\* FHD's campus will enhance the aesthetics and safety of the neighborhood, improving neighbors' well-being and inspiring other community investments. The health benefits of time outside are well-researched. The new campus will benefit FHD's clients who suffer from post-traumatic stress. It will also be a respite for clients who must stay on shelter grounds until they receive their "A" number which can take weeks or months.

\*Statistics from Data Driven Detroit's "Southwest Detroit Neighborhoods Profile."

**Project Summary:** FHD's front lawn is approximately 1,600 square yards of inactive space. A berm that runs the width of the yard obstructs the view from FHD's front door to the homes across the street making it difficult for parents to monitor their children. Clients must gather on an adjacent property to play volleyball or soccer because the berm renders the front yard useless for large group activities. Inside, FHD has a single common room that must serve as a classroom, meeting room, living room, play space, and yoga studio. The room is open and adjacent to the dining room and main hallway, so there is often too much noise to effectively engage in the common room activity.

By leveling the front yard and adding landscaping, seating, a covered patio, and fencing, FHD's clients will have a new space to play and socialize. The new campus will positively impact clients' mental and physical well-being and increase neighborhood safety. Project Renderings: <http://bit.ly/fhd-renderings>

**Uniqueness of program and population served:** FHD offers a unique and critical set of low- to no-cost services to indigent asylum seekers in a heavily immigrant neighborhood within an international border city. FHD provides both shelter and legal aid under one roof and basic needs and access to medical and mental health care and pre-employment training. More than just a service provider, though, FHD is a neighborhood business whose +100 annual clients live, shop, play, learn, and (after receiving their authorizations) work in Detroit and the surrounding areas, benefitting the local economy.

This project will foster positive activity and safety: drawing neighbors and clients outside for socializing, giving children a fenced area in which to play, and beautifying a safe route to school. Many children walk on FHD's side of Desmond Street to avoid walking near the crumbling, blighted building directly across from FHD. That property is often used as an illegal dumping site. Site Photos: <http://bit.ly/fhd-site-photos>

**Sustainability:** Already, FHD pays for lawn maintenance which is handled by staff and contracted professionals. Those costs are covered by grants and individual donations. After the renovations are completed, those maintenance funds will be used to maintain the upgraded campus. FHD views this project as an opportunity to engage volunteers and clients who will help clean graffiti, pick up litter, weed the yard, create outdoor programming, and tend the gardens.