

# ECO-D

DETROIT, MI, USA • AUGUST, 2017



## SNAPSHOT

**PROJECT TYPE:** Neighborhood Revitalization

### SITE SIZE:

- HOPE Village: 1 square mile
- West Village: ½ square mile

**RESIDENTS:** 8, 3000 residents in two pilot neighborhoods

### DEMOGRAPHICS:

- 97% African American residents in HOPE Village
- 70% African American residents in West Village
- West Village density 110% higher than City of Detroit Average

### ECONOMY:

- 50% of residents in HOPE Village live below the poverty line

### INFRASTRUCTURE:

- HOPE Village Motown Movement House
- HOPE Village LEED® Platinum Lasalle House
- West Village Green Alley

### ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES:

Youth education and job training, commercial and residential energy efficiency, LEED® Certified buildings, stormwater, green infrastructure, recycling and composting, urban agriculture

### KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- EcoWorks (backbone organization)
- The Greening of Detroit
- Community Development Advocates of Detroit
- Detroit Future City
- Vista Vantage Consulting Group LLC
- The City of Detroit
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority

## INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

In 2014, a consortium of regional civic, public, and private partners, led by the organization EcoWorks, founded Eco-D, a collaborative backbone organization offering structure and process to support the creation of sustainable neighborhood development throughout the City of Detroit, Michigan.

Detroit is the 18th largest city in the U.S., but it used to be the fifth. Its 2015 population of 677,000, is less than 35% percent of its peak in (insert the year that this was) of nearly two million residents. The city is over 80% African American with a small percentage of Hispanic, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern populations.

Today, the regeneration of Detroit is being led by dedicated community activists and residents, including Eco-D, who are deeply embedding sustainability, equity, and resilience into the revitalization of the city's neighborhoods.

Eco-D is a "second-stage" intervention, supporting community-driven efforts that are already in development. Once a community has created a sustainability plan for their future, Eco-D brings support and services to implement that vision. Eco-D is advancing neighborhood-based sustainability efforts that layer multiple initiatives and partners, and showcase how these approaches can be applied differently to diverse types of neighborhoods. This collaborative process will produce community-led economic development that uses best practices and innovations in sustainability.



Eco-D serves a variety of regeneration efforts through technical assistance, educational workshops, and learning exchanges to help interested neighborhoods elevate their sustainability plans and build capacity. In 2016, Eco-D selected two pilot communities — West Village and HOPE Village — to support and to demonstrate that the Eco-D model is applicable to neighborhoods across the city regardless of demographics or current economic challenges.



### WEST VILLAGE

The Detroit neighborhood of West Village is a walkable community located just minutes from downtown and serves as a gateway to the Detroit Riverwalk and Belle Isle. With over 3,000 people concentrated in less than half a square mile, the community has twice the average density of the city as a whole. West Village is a mixed-housing community with a growing number of local businesses and community assets such as churches, health clinics, hospitals, and community clubs.

Because of its existing density and proximity to downtown and popular open spaces, West Village is quickly attracting private and public funding and development. Led by Eco-D, the West Village Association, and The Villages CDC, the community has established a nine-member Sustainability Committee to represent community needs and co-create environmentally and socially responsible plans for future development. The West Village's vision includes an official Sustainability Framework, a green alley pilot program, stormwater infrastructure, high walkability, and community spaces. The Eco-D partnership is supporting these efforts and creating opportunities to model successful community-led sustainable development in the neighborhood.



### HOPE VILLAGE

Focus: HOPE, is a Detroit-based civil and human rights nonprofit leading a comprehensive, long-term initiative, HOPE Village, designed to radically change health, education, and prosperity outcomes for families within the 100 blocks surrounding its campus in Detroit by 2031. HOPE Village is a predominantly African American community, with approximately 5,300 residents. The community struggles with high unemployment and low educational attainment rates, and poverty levels for children in HOPE Village are about three times the state and national averages.

The Eco-D partnership will help connect HOPE Village and Focus: HOPE to resources and expertise to implement their sustainability projects — many of which are already underway — while at the same time presenting to others a model of equitable development. Outcomes for the partnership include completion of Lasalle House, the first LEED® Platinum home rehabilitation project in the city, as well as self-sufficiency around access to healthy food and a low-income solar feasibility study.



ECO-D TEAM MEMBERS AT THE 2014 INCUBATOR

## ECO-D + TARGET CITIES: PILOTING SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOOD REGENERATION IN DETROIT

Thanks to support from the Kresge Foundation, a project team representing Eco-D participated in the 2014 EcoDistricts Incubator, a three-day intensive training designed to help accelerate sustainable district-scale projects. During the three days, the team determined action steps for establishing their governance structure and identified specific next steps. Led by EcoWorks, the core team continued to work together after the Incubator using consensus-style decision-making to solidify its programmatic structure and formalize a Declaration of Cooperation, a document that outlines the intentions of the multiple stakeholder parties in working together, with each bringing specific roles, resources, and expertise to the Eco-D initiative.

In 2015, Eco-D joined EcoDistricts' Target Cities program to advance its capacity, governance, and leadership, guided by the EcoDistricts Protocol. Eco-D used 18 months of Target Cities support to establish the two Eco-D pilot neighborhoods and set a roadmap for each, collect baseline data following the EcoDistricts Protocol, engage residents in the ideas and principles of Eco-D, identify neighborhood priorities, and implement projects in both Eco-D neighborhoods. Simultaneously, Eco-D offered a series of workshops to neighborhoods across the city to help create a pipeline of neighborhoods ready to adopt its model of sustainable development.

### ABOUT THE ECODISTRICTS TARGET CITIES PROGRAM

Target Cities was a two-year immersion program that has benefited 11 districts across nine North American cities. Launched in 2014 as a Clinton Global Initiative Commitment, the program was designed to advance sustainable, district-scale development while creating replicable models for change. By providing peer learning and technical assistance, Target Cities helped participating teams elevate their sustainability strategy with an emphasis on project governance, performative roadmapping and EcoDistricts Certified readiness.

Together, the cohort of 30 practitioners from 11 industry sectors participated in four peer learning workshops and a series of best practice webinars.

Key program partners included Enterprise Community Partners, Global Green, USGBC, Reshape Infrastructure Strategies, Biohabitats, McGuire Woods, Neighborworks America and iSEED. A key outcome of the program was the production of the EcoDistricts Protocol and certification program, EcoDistricts Certified.

Learn more at:

[www.ecodistricts.org/target-cities](http://www.ecodistricts.org/target-cities)



FOCUSED HANDS COMMUNITY GARDEN



FOCUS: HOPE STREET BANNER

## EARLY WINS

**PROSPERITY:** Eco-D has worked on a number of small projects in partnership with EcoWorks Youth Energy, a program that cultivates the next generation of green leaders by engaging youth from diverse backgrounds in hands-on sustainability service learning projects. Together, the organizations implemented three projects in HOPE Village: an art activism mural at the Salsinger Playfield, the installation of renewable energy-generating playground equipment at Glazer Elementary School, and the production of a food justice conference at Focus: HOPE.



**HEALTH + WELLBEING:** Focus: Hope was awarded a FreshLo Planning Grant from the Kresge Foundation in 2016. This grant supports the “Curate and Cultivate” food cluster program weaving together food-related activities in the HOPE village including a vibrant food cluster, a food and art pathway, as well as a digital and oral history tour of local footways.



**LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE:** In 2016, Eco-D secured \$100,000 in a funding partnership with the Detroit Revitalization Fellows to construct a green alley in West Village in order to create a catchment system for stormwater from impervious surfaces that will reduce both local waterway pollution and residential basement flooding. The green alley will also increase property values and create a safe, engaging community space. Eco-D has assembled a Green Alley Leadership Team to advance the project.



**RESOURCE REGENERATION:** Eco-D partnered with Zero Waste Detroit and The Greening of Detroit to present neighborhood-specific recycling and composting workshops in each Eco-D neighborhood. The workshops aimed to educate residents on Detroit’s recently introduced curbside recycling and composting program. In conjunction with the workshops, Zero Waste Detroit distributed free recycling bins to participants.





Eco-D partnered with the Wayne State University School of Social Work to provide energy efficiency counseling at a low-income senior housing complex in HOPE Village and to conduct a survey with local business owners. The survey helped to determine opportunities for energy efficiency projects in West Village, as well as broader energy efficiency strategy development with multifamily building owners across several Detroit neighborhoods. In partnership with Eco-D, Focus: HOPE secured funding to complete the renovation of the blighted Lasalle House in HOPE Village -- the first LEED® Platinum home in the Once renovated, Lasalle House will run completely off the power grid, serving as a demonstration site for green technologies, a meeting space for the community, and an art gallery.

The funding will support an analysis to determine the feasibility of transitioning portions of the neighborhood off the electric grid by transforming brownfield sites for solar generation. This project could produce a model for vacant land reuse that enhances the environmental sustainability of Detroit's neighborhoods.

HOPE Village is part of the SunShot Solar in Your Community Challenge, a competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's SunShot Initiative that aims to expand solar access to low and moderate income communities and nonprofit organizations. Focus: HOPE is putting together a team and a proposed project for a HOPE Village Innovative Solar Implementation and Ownership Network (VISION) project. The VISION project will break down barriers and support the financing and construction of renewable power in the HOPE Village in a cost effective and replicable manner. It will explore two models - one involving a rooftop installation at Focus: HOPE's Center for Children. The second model will involve the installation of rooftop solar on two or more demonstration homes in the HOPE Village that are owned by nonprofits and used for community purposes.

## LESSONS LEARNED + CONTINUED CHALLENGES

At the end of Target Cities' two-year engagement, the Eco-D team was evaluated by its internal staff and board and EcoDistricts personnel. The points below reflect assessments shared by all parties.

1. A devastating fire in EcoWorks' Reclaim Detroit warehouse became an understandable priority for the organization to focus on partway through its participation in the Target Cities program. Though there were funding challenges, EcoWorks was able to successfully rebuild the warehouse.

2. In 2016, Eco-D announced that West Village and HOPE Village had been accepted into their pilot ecodistrict program. The process to secure the two pilot neighborhoods had been a lengthy one. During the initial application period, there was confusion among prospective applicants regarding the resources that Eco-D would provide and concern that the original application criteria was too stringent. As a result, the first application round did not result in any neighborhoods being accepted into the program, and the process was delayed by more than six months. Eco-D stakeholders had to re-strategize around its criteria, application process, and program design in order to meet the needs of participating neighborhoods.

3. Eco-D is based on a collaborative governance model between seven public, private, and civic organizations. EcoWorks, a highly respected nonprofit organization that primarily offers low income weatherization and workforce training programs, serves as the backbone organization of the initiative. EcoWorks' Executive Director played a major role in launching Eco-D, however the ED ended up leaving EcoWorks after some time. This caused struggle in keeping the momentum moving for the initiative, but the former ED provided ongoing support and mentorship even after leaving the organization.

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## NEXT STEPS

Eco-D anticipates long-term engagement with the City of Detroit's newly created Office of Sustainability, helping to invigorate regeneration efforts and embedding sustainability, resilience, and equity in neighborhood initiatives. Eco-D will continue to deploy the EcoDistricts Protocol to strengthen Focus: HOPE, and expand the knowledge base of current staff with an invitation to the EcoDistricts Leadership Institute in 2018.

**“We were really excited to tap the expertise of the EcoDistricts staff and network, but also to start making connections to other people around the country working on these issues so we weren't working in isolation. Having that opportunity really galvanized and kick-started our work in a way that wouldn't have happened otherwise.”**

– JACOB CORVIDAE, ECOWORKS

**“We are trying to make HOPE Village an equitable, sustainable community that provides a high quality of life for all residents.”**

– STEPHANIE JOHNSON-COB, FOCUS: HOPE

## ABOUT ECODISTRICTS

EcoDistricts is nonprofit that advances a new standard for community development. Through its programs and certification standard, EcoDistricts helps create equitable, sustainable, and resilient **neighborhoods for all.**