



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

The Center for Michigan

Founded in 2006, the Center for Michigan is a 501(c)3 nonprofit public service organization.

The Center publishes:



Bridge Michigan (founded 2011), the state's largest nonprofit

news service and one of the largest nonprofit news organizations in the nation; and



BridgeDetroit (founded 2020), a nonprofit community news,

information and engagement media service in one of America's largest majority African American cities.

2023



A Year of Transition and Looking Ahead

This has been a significant year of transition for the Center for Michigan and its publications.

In 2023:

- **John Bebow** completed his service to the Center as publisher of Bridge Michigan;
- Founding board member **Mike Jandernoa** stepped down and new board member **Rob Fowler** joined the Center's board;
- At Bridge Michigan, **Joel Kurth** was promoted to executive editor of impact and enterprise and **Lisa Yanick Litwiller** was hired as executive editor of innovation and daily news as we prepared to say goodbye to senior editor **David Zeman** upon his retirement in February 2024; and
- At BridgeDetroit, founding managing editor **Catherine Kelly** departed and we hired **Laurén Abdel-Razzaq** as the new executive director (starting Jan. 1, 2024).

Finally, with great sadness, we said goodbye to dear friend, supporter, co-founder and board member of the Center for Michigan, **Kathy Power**, who passed away in November 2023.

What hasn't changed is **our mission to make Michigan better through high-quality, nonpartisan journalism and engagement**. And our commitment to doing so in a way that will ensure we continue to offer this public service to Michigan for many years to come.

In a tumultuous media environment, we practice thoughtful growth that maximizes journalistic impact, financial health and operational resilience. Our diversified support plays a key role in our financial health and stability. We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate to report that, for the second year in a row, **membership revenue from individual donors exceeded \$1 million**. (You can read more about our Financials on page 14 and 28 of this report.)

As we emerge from this year of transition, we look forward to working as a new leadership team to envision continued growth, evolution and impact for the organization — all while we continue to build upon our legacy of producing high-quality, impactful journalism for the people of Michigan.

Sincerely

Katy Locker

Our Mission

Making Michigan better through high-quality, nonpartisan journalism & engagement.



Our Values

Excellence & Effectiveness

We believe that rigorous journalism and public engagement are pillars of democracy. **We** provide high-quality journalism with fair and meticulously sourced reporting on policy-based issues that empowers all residents with facts, context and clarity. **We** embrace a culture of exploration and discovery. **We** are dedicated to building a better newsroom and nonprofit in Michigan, one that is financially sustainable for years to come and can contribute to new models for civic news.

Inclusivity & Accessibility

We respect all perspectives of residents in all Michigan communities, and we endeavor to reflect them in our reporting and engagement. **We** endeavor to be accessible to and to meet news consumers where they are with free access to all of our content. **We** eagerly collaborate with other newsrooms and partners when working together benefits Michigan residents. **We** seek a dialogue with readers and residents because the regular exchange of ideas through events and feedback benefits all of Michigan.

Trust & Reliability

We are beholden to no group, ideology or political party. **We** are transparent about — and independent of — our sources of funding. **We** use data to separate fact from conjecture, and approach stories eager to follow evidence wherever it leads. **We** dedicate all revenue to the mission of making Michigan better. **We** are clear about our methods. **We** own our mistakes promptly and transparently.

A Work Environment Where People Thrive

We put people first. **We** believe that outside interests and pursuits make staffers more interesting, productive and better at their jobs. **We** believe all staff deserve a workplace that is fair, respectful, intellectually challenging and uplifting in pursuit of excellence. **We** are dedicated to building a staff that reflects the diversity of our state. **We** pursue diversified revenue sources, prudent financial management and institutional decision-making to ensure long-term, sustainable growth. **We** endeavor to provide a safe, nourishing workplace that values kindness, development, mental health, communication and transparency.

You can read more about the Center for Michigan's [Mission and Values](#) on our website.

Reporting

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

In 2023, reporting from Bridge Michigan helped save taxpayers millions of dollars, exposed security failings at one of Michigan's top universities, led to two attorney general investigations and prompted legislation that may make it easier for drivers to get money for car repairs.

Reporting on Michigan's \$2 billion in pork barrel spending for politicians' pet projects exposed a \$25 million grant for a health campus in Clare. The payout, championed by former House Speaker Jason Wentworth, was awarded to a nonprofit led by his former aide and involved a \$3.5 million land sale that benefited the representative who succeeded Wentworth in the Legislature.

Public records show staffers stopped payment on the grant one day after Bridge reported on the issue, saving taxpayers \$15 million. That grant is now the focus of a criminal investigation, as is a separate \$2-million project to bring rockets to Michigan that Bridge has written about extensively.

Bridge reporting following the mass shooting at Michigan State University uncovered a 13-minute gap between the first 911 call and a campus-wide alert warning students — a delay that has never been fully explained. Our reporters also uncovered campus concern about the lack of classroom locks months before the shootings, and clear documentation that other campuses nationwide have investigated mass shootings in far more depth and with much more transparency than MSU.

Finally, legislation was introduced to streamline Michigan's system for reimbursing drivers for damages caused by faulty roads after Bridge published a series of stories about the problem.

EDUCATION

In turbulent times for public education, Bridge Michigan probed how Democrats' increased funding for schools may (or may not) make a difference in student achievement.

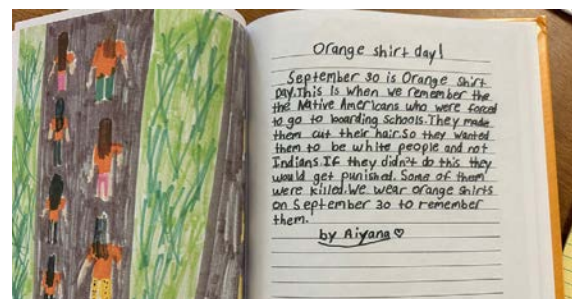
Bridge followed numerous twists and turns in the college access and student loan forgiveness debate. Bridge covered controversies about book bans, censorship and parental rights across the state. Bridge looked into how Native American students fare in Michigan schools. And Bridge closely followed how Democratic majorities in the Legislature rewrote policy on grading schools and evaluating teachers.



Michigan officials have paused a \$25 million grant to develop a Complete Health campus project in Clare (Bridge photo by Jonathan Oosting)



Two students were killed in their classroom and the third was killed in the MSU Union during a Feb. 13 campus rampage by a gunman who killed himself as police approached him hours later. (Bridge photo by Dale Young)



Students at schools like Watersmeet Township School, where more than half of students are Native American, will soon have the option of listing specific tribal affiliations on their school records, allowing tribes for the first time to track how their students are faring. (Bridge photo by Ron French)

POLITICS & POLICY

For the first time in nearly 40 years, Democrats wielded all levers of power in Michigan, capturing both chambers of the Legislature after controlling the offices of governor, attorney general and secretary of state and having a majority of nominees on the state Supreme Court.

Bridge Michigan's Capitol reporters wrote more than 200 articles that not only documented how elected officials used that power, but what it means to residents. Bridge published analyses of major laws, including the efficacy of "red flag" gun laws, implications of tax changes, repeal of the Right-to-Work law, auto insurance changes, proposed changes to drug immunity laws and more.

Bridge also continued its aggressively nonpartisan coverage of both parties, warts-and-all, from the power struggle amid Michigan Republican Party leaders to disgruntlement among progressives in Lansing about the priorities of fellow Democrats. Bridge reporters were tenacious in covering the fallout from the 2020 election, from the exodus of deep-pocketed donors to the Republican Party and criminal charges against election deniers, to reforms to make voting more secure and add guardrails to the certification of elections. Bridge also attempted to hold Democrats accountable for promises to expand public records requests to the Legislature and executive branch, as well as more strenuous financial disclosure requirements.

ENVIRONMENT

In one of Bridge Michigan's most ambitious projects, environment and business reporters spent months chronicling "Michigan's Industrial Legacy," a multi-story, multimedia account of how communities shoulder the burden of environmental cleanups from auto factories—even as taxpayers spend hundreds of millions of dollars to help polluters build new plants. The report helped prompt lawmakers to introduce reforms that would hold automakers and other companies responsible for contaminated properties while bringing more transparency to large-scale industrial deals.

Bridge closely followed the accelerating debate over environmental and recreational impacts of potential dam removals on Michigan's most iconic rivers. Bridge reported extensively on Michigan's ambitious energy goals, traveling to rural communities to show how the debate about land use and green energy is transforming small towns.



Republican Sen. Ed McBroom, left, and Democratic Sen. Jeremy Moss, far right, are proposing a new plan to expand the Michigan Freedom of Information Act. (Bridge photo by Jonathan Oosting)



Gov. Gretchen Whitmer speaks to supporters during a ceremony in Royal Oak in Oakland County to sign red flag gun legislation. (Courtesy photo)



Milan Mayor Ed Kolar wants Ford to either reopen or sell the shuttered factory in his town. But he has struggled to get answers from the company, and worries contamination could complicate the site's future. (Bridge photo by David Ruck)

BUSINESS

In a year of nationwide labor strife, Bridge Michigan dug into the historic auto industry strike, gains earned by United Auto Workers, and the potential short- and long-term impacts on the Big Three automakers in a global market. Bridge reporters scrutinized Michigan's massive subsidy of the auto industry's transformation to electric vehicles, examined the track record of tax incentives and traveled the state to show how local objections could slow the shift. Bridge Michigan also set out to quantify the toll unaddressed factory contamination has exacted on Michigan, and what the state can do to avoid repeating history as automakers and suppliers race toward an EV future.

Bridge reporters wrote more than two dozen dispatches documenting Michigan's acute worker shortages in critical industries from public safety to health care. The project accompanied deep reporting about Michigan's population crisis and what — if anything — the state can do to attract younger residents. Bridge reporters hosted forums and podcasts about the problem, which was further highlighted by a gubernatorial task force to recommend policy solutions.

HEALTH

Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic, Bridge Michigan remained the only major news outlet in Michigan to publish weekly case, hospitalization and death counts. The feature remained incredibly popular with readers, generating thousands of views per week.

But as the severity of the pandemic waned, Bridge reporters shifted focus to a host of other public health topics.

Bridge explored Michigan's status as an outlier in abortion access in the Midwest, including controversies about the abortion pill, an increase in procedures from out-of-state residents and over-the-counter birth control, as well as the legislative debate about repealing old restrictions.

Bridge reporting also delved into the mental health crisis plaguing Michigan, explored why women of color die in childbirth at higher rates and worked to explain how health care industry business trends, closures and mergers impact quality of service for statewide residents.



Mike Salinas works as a pharmacy tech in Detroit. Employers expect health care fields like his to face critical worker shortages in Michigan over the next 10 years. (Bridge photo by Brayan Gutierrez)



Registered nurse Amy McNamara jokes with a patient at Memorial Healthcare in Owosso. Health care is one of the many critical fields suffering worker shortages in Michigan today. (Bridge photo by Robin Erb)



The debate over abortion access played out at a packed, sometimes emotional committee hearing in Lansing. (Bridge photo by Robin Erb)



Michigan families say a lack of child psychiatrists leaves their children without the expertise to manage serious mental illness. (Bridge photo by Robin Erb)

Honors & Awards

Bridge Michigan environmental reporter Kelly House was named *Michigan Journalist of the Year* by the Michigan Press Association (MPA) — the third consecutive Bridge Michigan reporter to capture the award. House was lauded for reporting showing how gaps in Michigan environmental policies left the state's waters, land and residents at risk. All told, Bridge Michigan collected 21 awards from MPA, including first-place honors as *Statewide News Media Publication of the Year*, the sixth time Bridge Michigan has received this honor. Capitol reporter Yue Stella Yu won the Rookie Writer Award, which honors the top early career journalists in the state.



Michigan Press Association

Michigan Journalist of the Year – Kelly House

Statewide News Media Publication of the Year

Additional Honors from the Michigan Press Association:

Business/Agriculture News

- (1st Place) Paula Gardner and Mike Wilkinson, [*Rising wages, few workers: A small town in Michigan adjusts to the new economy*](#)
- (2nd Place) Paula Gardner for [*Up North businesses are buying housing just to lure summer staff*](#)
- (3rd Place) Paula Gardner and Kelly House for [*After two weeks and 1,100 evacuations, mishap tests Flat Rock's loyalty to Ford*](#)

News Enterprise Reporting

- (1st Place) Kelly House and Jonathan Oosting for [*Lee Chatfield sexual allegations*](#)

Spot News Story

- (1st place) Bridge Staff for [*Abortion decision leaked - what it could mean to Michigan*](#)
- (2nd place) Paula Gardner, Jonathan Oosting, Mike Wilkinson, Ron French and Kelly House for [*Oxford High School shooting*](#)
- (3rd place) Isabel Lohman and Tracie Mauriello (Chalkbeat) for [*Republicans add transgender athlete ban to Michigan education budget bill*](#)



Local Independent Online News

Operational Resilience Award – Center for Michigan

Local Independent Online News (LION)

Winner - **Operational Resilience Award.** Bridge Michigan executed sweeping organizational succession when the founding CEO stepped down. The Board of Directors also welcomed a new chair and several new members — all while Bridge Michigan surpassed \$1 million in annual membership revenue three years ahead of schedule.

From the LION judges: "Bridge Michigan planned and executed a truly exceptional change management plan under their new CEO. Bridge has implemented new processes and operations that demonstrate the organization's leadership acumen and commitment to iterative development in response to staff and community needs."

Additionally, Bridge Michigan was named a finalist for the LION Public Service Award for reporting on the Patmos Library in Jamestown Township. This library "became ground zero... when taxpayers twice voted to defund the community library to protest LGBTQ-themed books on the library shelves. Bridge Michigan [*broke what quickly became*](#)

Honors & Awards, Continued

[a national story](#) as the library faced imminent closure. Their coverage spurred a successful [crowdfunding campaign](#), which led to more than 4,000 donors [giving nearly \\$300,000](#) — providing the library with 18 months of operating expenses while it works to build a more inclusive future electorate.”



Society of Professional Journalists -
Detroit

In May 2023, Bridge Michigan received 19 awards from the Detroit chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) for its reporting, including four first-place awards.

- Collaborative Coverage - Isabel Lohman (Bridge Michigan), with Lily Altavena (Detroit Free Press), Koby Levin and Ethan Bakuli (Chalkbeat Detroit), for [The \\$6 billion question: Will COVID relief funds help Michigan students recover?](#)
- Community/Local News Reporting - Ron French, for [A Michigan community defunds its public library in fight over LGBTQ books](#)
- Feature Reporting - Jonathan Oosting for [Jesus Hitler, an 'adrenaline junkie' and the plot to train Michigan neo-Nazis](#)
- Health Reporting - Robin Erb for [On-demand primary care doctors only served Michigan's wealthy. Not anymore](#)



Sierra Club of Michigan -
Environmental Journalism Award

- Environmental Journalism Award (Winner) Kelly House

Recognition & Ratings



Nonpartisan and
Unbiased: All Sides,

a national media bias watchdog, rated Bridge Michigan as “center,” indicating that it is not biased to the left or the right, based on “multi-partisan, scientific analysis.” Center for Michigan publications scored 100 out of 100 from NewsGuard, a website staffed by a team of journalists and experienced editors that produces reliability ratings and scores for news and information websites based on nine journalistic criteria. Our score reflects “high credibility” in adherence to all nine standards of credibility and transparency.



Customer
Satisfaction: Bridge

Michigan's average Net Promoter Score (NPS) was +43 in 2023. Net Promoter is a key measure of customer satisfaction used by a wide range of industries. Calculated on a scale of -100 to +100, any Net Promoter Score above 0 is considered good.



Gold Seal of Transparency:
The GuideStar Seals of Transparency, introduced by Candid in 2013, provides

recognition when a nonprofit shares information on the GuideStar website. To attain a Gold Seal, the Center for Michigan provided financial, board, staff, program and brand details that enable current and potential donors to thoroughly research the organization.

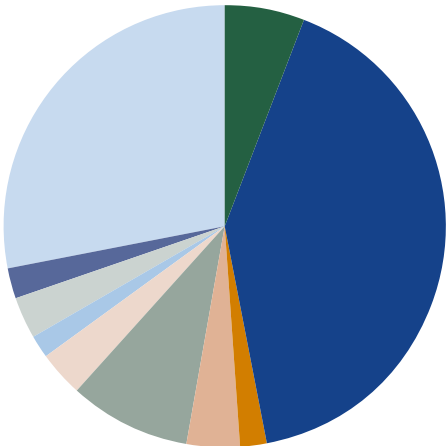
Readers & Subscribers

Sources of Website Traffic

More than **481K** Average Monthly Unique Visitors

More than **135K** Newsletter Subscribers

12% Increase in Newsletter Subscribers from 2022 to 2023



41.2%	Google organic
27.9%	Direct
8.8%	Bridge Newsletter
5.9%	Newsbreak
3.9%	Google news
3.2%	Facebook
2.9%	other
2.3%	Referral
2.1%	Google ads
1.9%	Smartnews

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
236,994	1,487,712	577,027	698,063	481,611	Average Monthly Unique Visitors
45,231	90,513	108,354	120,973	135,711	Newsletter Subscribers

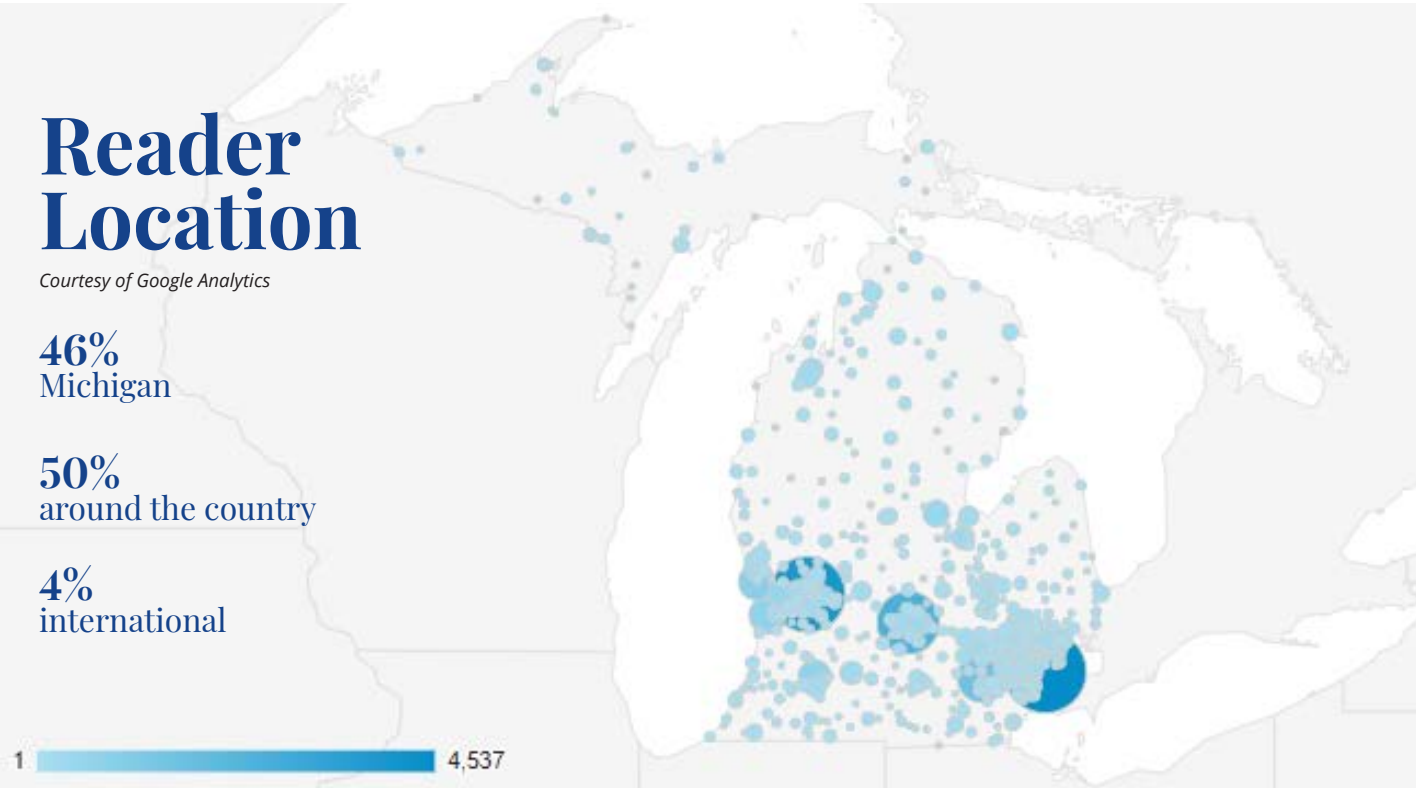
Reader Location

Courtesy of Google Analytics

46%
Michigan

50%
around the country

4%
international



Partnerships



Michigan Press Association:

In partnership with the Michigan Press Association (MPA), Bridge Michigan provides syndicated news to newspapers across Michigan to help those hometown publications connect readers to state policy and politics. In addition, Bridge Michigan values its partnership with MPA to promote press freedom through its policy work and legal hotline.



VoteBeat: A nonpartisan reporting project created by Chalkbeat covering local election integrity and voting access.



Eldercare Collaborative: Ongoing, solutions-focused reporting on eldercare, home health care and health equity issues, with news outlets in southeast Michigan and western New York as part of the New York & Michigan Solutions Journalism Cooperative.



Michigan State University School of Journalism:

Ashley Zhou, a student at Michigan State, joined the Bridge Michigan staff for a summer internship focused on environmental reporting. This specialty-beat internship was the result of a collaboration between Bridge Michigan and the MSU Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.



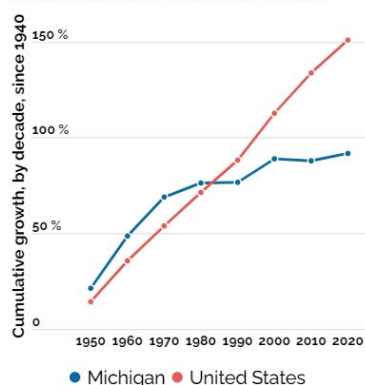
University of Michigan English Department: Riley Hodder, a student at the University of Michigan, joined Bridge Michigan for an eight-week summer internship during which she reported and wrote on a variety of subjects. The internship was the result of a long-time collaboration between Bridge Michigan and the university's English Department.



Great Lakes News Collaborative: The Great Lakes News Collaborative, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, consists of Bridge Michigan, Circle of Blue, Great Lakes Now at Detroit Public Television and Michigan Public, working together to bring audiences news and information about the impact of climate change, pollution, and aging infrastructure on the Great Lakes and drinking water.

Falling behind

Michigan's population once grew faster than the nation's, but has lagged since 1990. If the state had kept pace, it would have over 13 million people today, 3.1 million more than the current total.



Source: U.S. Census

Bridge

— Mike Wilkinson



Citizens Research Council: The Citizens Research Council of Michigan produced a [five-paper study](#) titled "Michigan's Path

to a Prosperous Future: Challenges and Opportunities" that focused on major challenges facing Michigan's population growth, economy, talent, infrastructure and environment. Bridge Michigan, the Citizens Research Council, and Altarum hosted a timely and important [conversation](#) in May about how Michigan is losing ground to and becoming less competitive than other states. In November, a [second event](#) featured a discussion about potential solutions to the state's population struggles.

Bridge Michigan also spent the year [documenting](#) how population loss affects everything from the economy and health care to education and quality of life. Capitol reporters Lauren Gibbons and Jonathan Oosting hosted a five-part [podcast](#) discussing the Citizens Research Council and Altarum series.

Michigan's population has been flat for decades and is expected to begin declining by the year 2045. (Bridge Michigan graphic by Mike Wilkinson)



*The Center for Michigan CEO Katy Locker meets with donors at the first of our four-event series, held in the CFM's Ypsilanti office.
(Bridge Photo by Asha Lewis)*

By the numbers:

14
Total
Events

44
Featured
Speakers

1,387
Total Virtual
Viewers

10

Engaging

Bridge Michigan Readers & Members

From Our Statement of Values:

- We strive to build an engaged civic community.
- We seek a dialogue with readers and residents because the regular exchange of ideas through events and feedback benefits all of Michigan.
- We endeavor to be accessible to and to meet news consumers where they are.

Our engagement efforts build community among our readers, amplify our journalism and connect residents with those who make decisions for Michigan. In 2023, Bridge Michigan continued our COVID-inspired shift to virtual events, allowing us to interact with readers all across the state during an hour of Zoom in the middle of their day. In addition, the Center for Michigan held a series of in-person events in the fall of 2023 as an opportunity for our new board and staff leadership to connect with our partners. We look forward to seeing more readers, members and partners in 2024.



Issue Series – Bridge Michigan Lunch Break

9 Events, 965 Participants

- Educating for Careers in Michigan
- Gun Violence in Michigan
- Help Wanted in Health Care
- How Michigan's Spaces Will - or Won't - Keep People Here
- Industrial Legacy
- MI Democrats' Year in the Legislative Majority
- Water Priorities for the 2023 Legislature*
- Michigan's Path to a Prosperous Future, in partnership with CRC/Altarum
- Michigan's Stagnant Population and Potential Solutions, in partnership with CRC/Altarum

* This was the final event in a series presented in partnership with Circle of Blue and funded by the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation and the Bosch Community Fund.



Bridge Michigan Culture Club

5 Events, 422 Participants

- American Salvage - with author and Michigan native Bonnie Jo Campbell
- August Snow - with author and Farmington Hills resident Stephen Mack Jones
- Bad Axe - with director David Siev
- Once We Were Here - with author Christopher Cosmos
- We Kept Our Towns Going - with author Phyllis Michael Wong

Reader Survey Results

Bridge Michigan



From Our Statement of Values:

- We strive to be inclusive and accessible to all of our readers.
- We respect all perspectives of residents in all Michigan communities, and we endeavor to reflect them in our reporting and engagement.
- We endeavor to be accessible to news consumers and to meet them where they are, and build a dialogue with readers and residents because the regular exchange of ideas through events and feedback benefits all of Michigan.

In 2023, 5,449 total participated in our annual reader survey — up 37% over 2022. To better help Bridge Michigan understand its audience, this survey is sent to all Bridge Michigan newsletter subscribers, as well as shared on our website and social media channels. The survey sample represents 4% of Bridge Michigan's total newsletter subscribers.

63% of respondents said that if Bridge Michigan ceased to exist tomorrow, they would feel they have lost a source of news they can't find anywhere else.

67% of respondents said Bridge Michigan newsletters are almost always or usually useful.

75% of respondents said they do not detect any political bias in Bridge Michigan's reporting.

What readers have done thanks to Bridge's journalism

68%

Shared a story

22%

Participated in a community discussion

40%

Contributed money to a cause or event

27%

Visited a local business

44%

Voted in a local election

19%

Attended an event



"In 2023, nearly 9,000 Bridge Michigan readers powered our work through their generous donations to our nonprofit newsroom. These gifts make up more than one quarter of our overall organizational budget, and affirm the value that our reporting brings to Michigan residents. We are so grateful for our member community and look forward to delivering the news and engagement they have supported in 2024."

– Amber DeLind, Bridge Michigan
Membership & Engagement Director

If you have any questions about how you or your organization can best support Bridge Michigan's work, please contact our Membership & Engagement Director Amber DeLind at adelind@bridgemi.com.

Bridge Club Members

The Individual Charitable Donors Supporting Our Work

54% of Bridge Club members are sustaining donors. We're particularly grateful for these recurring members, whose monthly or annual donations give us consistency to help make long-term budget decisions. Recurring gifts are an important part of keeping our mission afloat. Bridge Club Membership levels:

- Bronze Membership (\$1-\$99 per year): 3,633 members
- Silver Membership (\$100-\$499 per year): 5,085 members
- Gold Membership (\$500+ per year): 207 members

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Supporting Members	3,594	8,662	8,743	8,926	8,925
Total Donations (household gifts <\$1,000)	\$274,335	\$734,330	\$874,084	\$964,140	\$1,026,542
Average Household Annual Donation Size	\$76	\$85	\$100	\$108	\$115

Our Financial

Health & Sustainability

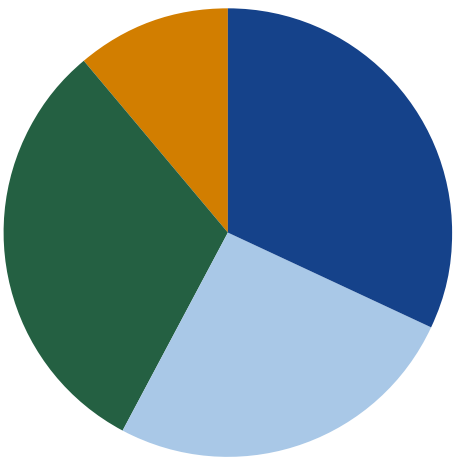
Building a Sustainable Model for Civic News: As a nonprofit newsroom, Bridge Michigan relies on the generosity of individuals, foundations and businesses to fund our reporting. All revenue returns to the mission of making Michigan better. We are dedicated to building a better newsroom and nonprofit in Michigan, one that is financially sustainable for years to come and can contribute to new models for civic news.

Membership is ¼ of Our Revenue!

Thanks to support from around the state, we raised **OVER \$1 MILLION DOLLARS** from nearly 9,000 individuals for the second year in a row! This represents a continuously growing segment of our revenue.

Transparency

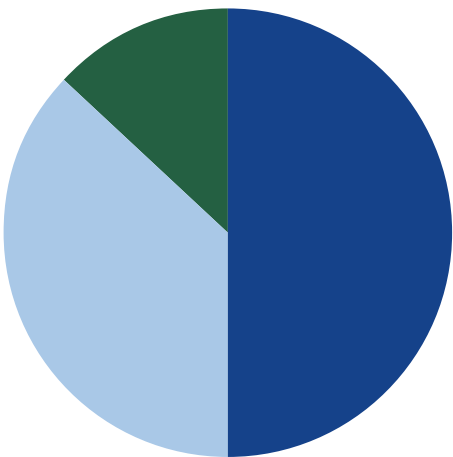
We achieve this fundraising success without sacrificing our journalistic integrity and fairness. We adhere to the Institute for Nonprofit News standards for transparency and publish the names of any individual or entity that supports us with over \$5,000 in a year.



2023 Revenue

32%	Foundation Grants
31%	Mid- & Major Giving (Charitable Gifts > \$1,000)
26%	Membership (Individual Charitable Gifts < \$1,000)
11%	Earned Revenue & Other Income

\$3,950,000

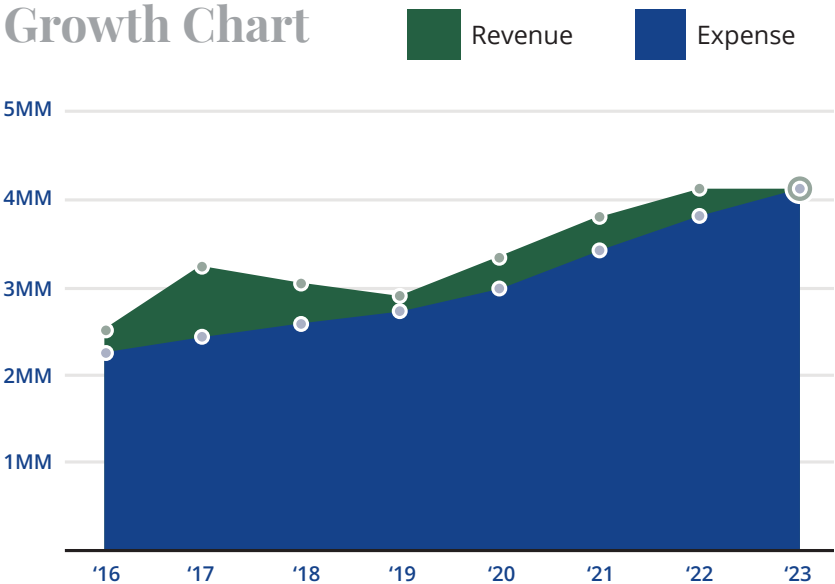


2023 Expense

50%	Newsroom/Journalism
37%	Administration
13%	Engagement

\$4,080,000

2016-2023 Growth Chart



The figures presented here are unaudited for 2023. The figures presented here represent the revenue and expenses of the Center for Michigan and Bridge Michigan. The Center for Michigan supports BridgeDetroit as an independent project and its financials are separately maintained (and available upon request).



Sunshine Campaign

Shedding Light on Government Decision-Making

We launched the Bridge Michigan Sunshine Campaign in 2023. The Sunshine Campaign is a multi-year effort to build a dedicated fund at Bridge Michigan for transparency, investigations, Freedom of Information costs and hurdles, and associated legal challenges — so Bridge Michigan can keep statewide readers informed on how our government makes decisions.

In 2015, the Center for Public Integrity ranked Michigan dead last among all states for government transparency and accountability due to poor systems to deter corruption, including a lack of financial and campaign disclosure. Michigan is one of only two states in which the governor and legislature are not subject to state Freedom of Information laws. Ever since receiving this dubious “honor,” leaders in both major political parties have acknowledged the problem and done nothing. Meanwhile, the need for transparency intensifies — with public bodies routinely denying or delaying the release of public documents or quoting extremely expensive fees for compiling them, thereby deterring the public and news organizations from understanding and reporting on the routine workings of government.

As a news organization dedicated to informing Michigan, we seek timely, affordable, thorough release of the records that document the conduct of the people’s business.

Support of the Bridge Michigan Sunshine Campaign demonstrates commitment and passion for a government that works for We the People and journalism’s essential role in shining light on what the public has a right to know.

Early supporters include:

Janice Bailey	Karen Jennings	Brian and Angie Smith
Charles Ballard	Jennette Kotila	Jane Speer
Thomas Biggs	Charles Monsma	Barbara Tucker
Bill Burdett	Robert Morris	Michael Unsworth
Kyle Caldwell	Valerie Overholt	
Max Gates	Thomas Porter	
Meegan Holland	Kirk Profit	

To contribute to the Bridge Michigan Sunshine Campaign, you can donate securely online by visiting www.bit.ly/bridgemisunshine2023. For additional information about the campaign or for alternative giving options, please contact Membership & Engagement Director Amber DeLind at adelind@bridgemi.com.

What Our Readers Are Saying

“We need people **reporting on critical issues** that impact all of us. In order for this information to be accurate and unbiased it must be **underwritten by its readers, not by special interests.**”

– Larry Swan

“**Solid journalism.** Good overview of important state news.”

– Ellen Ives

Bridge Builders

Organizational and Institutional Members Supporting our Work

Bridge Michigan's institutional membership program is an opportunity for nonprofit and business organizations to support our mission and reach our audience with marketing and sponsorship initiatives. Institutional members power Bridge Michigan's high-quality journalism and allow us to help readers and leaders alike navigate this fast-paced era of change with daily in-depth coverage of the issues most important to Michigan.

Leadership Circle Members (\$2,500)

Alticor/Amway	Michigan Community College Association
Business Leaders for Michigan	Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association
Martin Waymire Advocacy Communications Inc.	Public Sector Consultants
Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation	VVK PR + Creative
Michigan Chamber of Commerce	
Michigan College Access Network	

Community Partner Members (\$1,000)

Clark Hill	Michigan Association of State Universities
Crystal Mountain Resort	Michigan Center for Youth Justice
Frey Foundation	Michigan Environmental Council
Gud Marketing	Mission Point Press
McAlvey Merchant & Associates	Renaissance Venture Capital Fund
Michigan Association of Health Plans	Truscott Rossman Group LLC
Michigan Association of School Boards	University of Michigan - Ford School of Public Policy

Advertise With Us

Business and nonprofit partners have the opportunity to advertise with Bridge Michigan.

Daily Newsletter

Sponsorship – Place ads in Bridge Michigan's daily newsletter or any of our five Watch newsletters (Business, Education, Environment, Health and Politics) reaching targeted audiences of engaged readers.

Exclusive Sitewide Website

Sponsorship – Two ads on the Bridge Michigan homepage and two ads on each story page, with links to sponsor-designated landing pages.

Events Sponsorship – Events are on-the-record, open-to-the-public ways for Bridge Michigan to engage business leaders, policymakers, and readers in civic engagement and discourse on issues important to Michigan residents. These include our virtual Issue Series and Culture Club events, and our regional policy and conversation convenings.

For more information about Bridge Builders, sponsorship and advertising, please contact sponsorships@bridgemi.com.

What Our Readers Are Saying

"You **show real concern for Michigan's groundwater**, which over half of Michigan residents depend on for their drinking water. **Keep up the good work.**"

– Ken Ford

"You **invite direct contact with reporters via e-mail**, and your work is thorough and well written. I also **enjoy their appearances on Off The Record with Tim Skubick.**"

– Carlene Przykucki



Power Circle

Our Power Circle membership is a recognition program for individuals who have made significant investments in Bridge Michigan, designed as a way to bring these investors closer to the core of our work.

Pleasant Peninsula Circle (\$5,000+)

Essel and Menakka Bailey
James and Donna Brooks
Thomas Buhr
Brenda Frey
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**Support for BridgeDetroit*

***Support for both Bridge Michigan and BridgeDetroit*

Press Forward

We're excited about this new initiative announced in September to infuse \$500 million into local journalism. In the fall of 2023, the MacArthur, Knight and Ford foundations, along with more than 19 other foundations, launched Press Forward, an effort to increase philanthropic investment in local news. From their press release: "This national initiative will re-center local news as a force for community cohesion; support new models and solutions that are ready to scale; and close longstanding inequities in journalism coverage and practice." Press Forward seeks to reverse the dramatic decline in local news that has coincided with an increasingly divided America and weakening trust in institutions.

Our People

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Katy Locker, *ex officio*

Rob Fowler**

Philip Power

* *Departed board at 2023 annual meeting*

** *Joined board at 2023 annual meeting*

Center for Michigan & Bridge Michigan Staff

Leslie J. Allen, *Deputy Editor*
(started February 2024)

Lauren Gibbons, *Capitol Reporter*

Isabel Lohman, *Education Reporter*

John Bebow, *Publisher & Executive Advisor* (retired December 2023)

Jordyn Hermani, *Capitol Reporter* (started February 2024)

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Robin Erb, *Health Reporter*

Janelle D. James, *General Assignment Reporter*

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Ron French, *Enterprise Reporter*

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David Zeman, *Senior Editor* (retired February 2024)

Paula Gardner, *Business Reporter*

Asha Lewis, *Digital Marketing Associate*

Jackquelyn Garrett, *Fund Development Associate*

Katy Locker, *Chief Executive Officer*

Internship Program Participants

Ashley Zhou, *Michigan State University*

Irena Li, *Michigan State University*

Riley Hodder, *University of Michigan*

What Our Readers Are Saying

"Such a convenient way to get great, reliable reporting on what's happening in Michigan!"

– Lila Westenberg

John Bebow & David Zeman

Reflections on Accomplishments

John Bebow and David Zeman led Bridge Michigan's nonprofit, nonpartisan newsroom through a decade of remarkable growth and over 200 state and national awards. At its start, what was then Bridge Magazine was a twice-weekly publication, with a three-person editorial staff and a readership of 322,000 annually. At the conclusion of 2023, Bridge Michigan had over 5 million readers. Today, Bridge Michigan and the Center for Michigan have more than 20 full-time employees, including 13 reporters and editors putting out at least five online editions and seven newsletters every week. All of this would not have been possible without the vision, dedication and leadership of John and David.

John Bebow

John Bebow began his journalism career on a bike delivering newspapers and ended it playing an instrumental role in shaping Michigan's modern media industry.

Bebow stepped down at the end of 2023 from his role as publisher of Bridge Michigan, a publication that under his leadership won more than 200 state and national awards and was lauded as a national model for economic viability in nonprofit news. He will remain as a consulting executive advisor through 2025.

He had crucial roles in some of the biggest changes in Michigan media over the past 25 years, from uncovering corruption in Detroit as a reporter and helping launch the MLive online news site to launching and growing Bridge Michigan and its sister publication, BridgeDetroit.

Bebow has had ink in his blood since middle school when he delivered the Lansing State Journal on a route in his Ingham County hometown of Mason. After graduating from Western Michigan University, he worked at the Lansing State Journal, Traverse City Record-Eagle and Ann Arbor News before joining The Detroit News. There, he covered the mob, corruption in casino development and troubles in the city water department. He deployed to Iraq to cover the war for the News in 2003 and was injured in a military truck mishap. After a stint at the Chicago Tribune, John returned to his home state where, for the Detroit Free Press, he investigated Baker College.

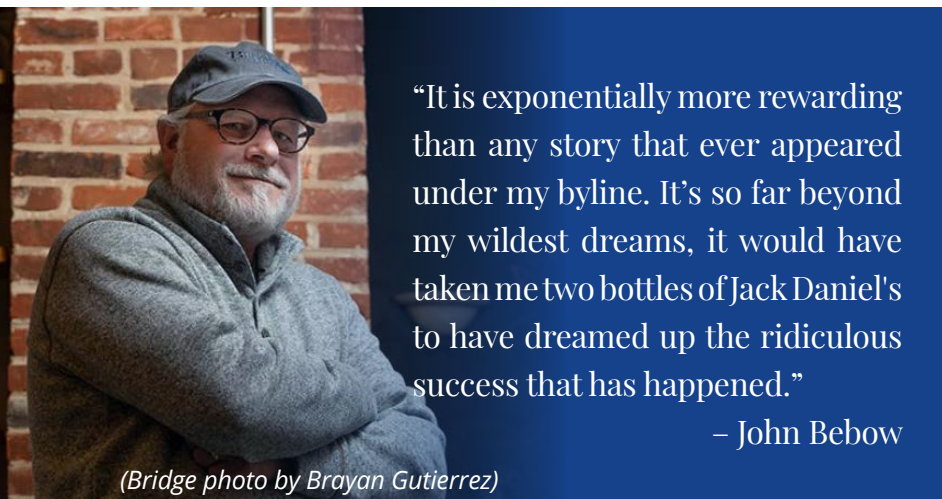
Bebow was part of the launch of MLive, which served as an early model for publications moving stories online. There, he rose to become editor-in-chief.

In 2006, John took the most impactful risk of his professional life, joining forces with former newspaper chain owner Phil Power to start the nonprofit "think and do" tank, The Center for Michigan, where as CEO John was the driving force behind the 2011 creation of what is now the nonprofit, nonpartisan publication Bridge Michigan. The former investigative reporter became a prolific fundraiser, a shrewd accountant and a boss who demanded the best of his employees while sticking to a mantra of "family first," giving staffers generous time off to deal with family issues.

At Bridge and through his work with the Michigan Press Association, Bebow championed government transparency, free press access and public records reform.

Bebow stepped down as CEO at the end of 2022 and was succeeded by Katy Locker, who had been chief operating officer.

To cap off his career, John was selected to the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame in January. He will be inducted during ceremonies at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing on April 14, 2024.



"It is exponentially more rewarding than any story that ever appeared under my byline. It's so far beyond my wildest dreams, it would have taken me two bottles of Jack Daniel's to have dreamed up the ridiculous success that has happened."

– John Bebow

(Bridge photo by Brayan Gutierrez)

David Zeman

David Zeman, senior editor at Bridge Michigan, retired from Bridge Michigan on Feb. 1, 2024. Zeman joined Bridge in 2013, two years after its launch.

Zeman was born in Detroit, the son of a Detroit public school teacher. He earned a law degree from the University of Miami, but found himself sneaking peeks at a newspaper under his desk while writing another in a line of boring interrogatories in a Miami law office.

He wanted something with a faster metabolism, so he quit the law and earned a master's in journalism from Columbia University in New York City. He worked as a reporter in Raleigh, N.C., and Miami before joining the investigative team at the Detroit Free Press. As editor of investigations, Zeman built a national reputation for explanatory watchdog reporting. He won state and national awards for reporting on education, politics, the legal system and business, projects that ignited reforms and legislation. As a Free Press editor, he directed an investigation of Detroit Mayor Kwame Kirkpatrick that won some of journalism's highest national honors, including the Pulitzer Prize, the George Polk Award and the Worth Bingham Prize.

Since Zeman took over, Bridge Michigan won six Newspaper of the Year or News Media of the Year awards from the Michigan Press Association. He edited two projects that won national Education Writers Association awards, and Bridge reporters have won the past three annual Journalist of the Year honors at the MPA.

Zeman has a reputation as a tireless and meticulous editor, and is proud that Bridge Michigan has a nonpartisan DNA that has made it a "pain in the ass" both to the administrations of Republican Gov. Rick Snyder and Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Inside the newsroom, he's proud of its culture of kindness and respect, something he swore he'd oversee if he ever ran a newsroom.

In an industry fraught with layoffs and closures, the respect Zeman offered his staff earned loyalty even among traditionally cynical reporters.

The newsroom is now led by Joel Kurth, who became executive editor for impact and enterprise on Aug. 1, and Lisa Yanick Litwiller, who started Jan. 3, 2024 as executive editor for innovation and daily news.

What Our Readers Are Saying

"I learn so much from your reporting and you get things done for Michigan!"

– Cheri McEneaney

"By far the best journalism in the state and you regularly touch on northern Michigan issues."

– Gary Appel

"Bridge is the finest source of statewide news and analysis in Michigan."

– Douglas Welker

"I teach Michigan Politics at Wayne State University, and your articles are great classroom resources."

– Marjorie Sarbaugh-Thompson

"I value news on K-12 education and local/state government in Michigan."

– James Ernest



"I wanted reporters to feel like they were sitting at the adults table. I wanted it to be a kind of place where reporters felt comfortable pushing back on stupid ideas that editors came up with. That was important and that's what I insisted on."

– David Zeman



BridgeDetroit

A community-engaged, community-focused, journalist-led newsroom

Four years ago, BridgeDetroit began as a daily news and engagement organization with a deep relationship with Detroiters. The purpose: provide critical journalism that helps residents better understand and participate in their civic lives.

BridgeDetroit launched at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, right before the summer of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter, in a city whose majority-Black population was devastated, inspired and forever changed by all of it. BridgeDetroit leaned into the promise of improving access to information and engagement and built an organization that has become an essential, leading part of the city's journalism ecosystem.

BridgeDetroit is:

- **CONNECTED:** Reaching thousands of Detroiters through its engagement approach, which is not about the extraction of information, but the formation of deep, sustained relationships.
- **RESPONSIVE:** BridgeDetroit has built its newsroom and priorities around the feedback it gets from Detroiters about what they need and want. The pillars of BridgeDetroit coverage — things like housing security, community safety, housing development and education — are all subjects Detroiters have told BridgeDetroit they care about deeply.
- **PROLIFIC:** With 30,000 newsletter subscribers and more than 40,000 monthly website visitors, BridgeDetroit is among the city's largest nonprofit news sources. Publishing new content almost every day, it brings the power and value of both responsive and enterprise journalism to Detroiters to enhance their civic understanding and participation.
- **GROWING SUSTAINABLY:** In addition to support from nearly every local foundation and several national ones, BridgeDetroit continues to enhance revenue through other sources (e.g., reader support, corporate support) through the model of income growth established by the Center for Michigan and Bridge Michigan.
- **PARTNERED:** Building substantial, important partnerships with other journalism, community and engagement organizations that broaden BridgeDetroit's reach and impact, and have helped lift other organizations' efforts.

BridgeDetroit Staff

Laurén Abdel-Razzaq, *Executive Director (started January 2024)*

Malachi Barrett, *Reporter*

Jena Brooker, *Reporter*

Orlando Bailey, *Engagement Director*

Christine Ferretti, *Associate Editor*

Stephen Henderson, *Executive Advisor*

Catherine Kelly, *Executive Director and Editor (departed March 2023)*

Nushrat Rahman, *Reporter (in partnership with Detroit Free Press)*

Micah Walker, *Reporter*

BridgeDetroit Interns

Paul Stryker, *Michigan State*

Erik Lominchar, *Michigan State*

New Leadership

On Jan. 3, 2024, Laurén Abdel-Razzaq began as BridgeDetroit's new executive director. Before joining BridgeDetroit, Laurén spent two years with Crain's Detroit Business where she was an assistant managing editor working with reporters who cover the city of Detroit, nonprofits, real estate and health care. Laurén was born in Detroit and grew up in Sterling Heights. She's a two-time graduate of Wayne State University where she was a member of the Journalism Institute for Media Diversity. She currently sits on the board of the Michigan chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association. Stephen Henderson continues in his role as executive advisor to BridgeDetroit.



- BridgeDetroit is an unincorporated project of the Center for Michigan.
- BridgeDetroit is an editorially independent publication with a specific focus on serving Detroiters.
- Bridge Michigan and BridgeDetroit have same-day publishing rights to each other's content and the editors and reporters of both publications seek to coordinate where editorial agendas overlap.
- BridgeDetroit benefits from the membership, audience development, production and administrative experience and expertise of the entire Center for Michigan team.
- The Center serves as fiduciary and employer for all BridgeDetroit staff.

What Our Readers Are Saying

"Great work, wish I had more to give.
Yes for 313!"

– Elizabeth Loria

"I grew up downriver & like to stay informed about local news. **Your reporters cover stories I can't get anywhere else.** Thanks!"

– Kim Peters

"Wonderful stories on a diversity of topics. I especially **enjoy the food coverage!**"

– Lisa Young

"I appreciate being kept **up to date on issues and news in the Detroit community.** Unbiased."

– Anitta Orr

"You tackle topics that no other Detroit news outlet covers (e.g. detailed city council coverage) and without being tendentious – or at least **from the point of view of the majority of Detroiters.**"

– Maxwell Morgan

"BridgeDetroit gives **an in-depth look at what's happening in Detroit** and I have been **really impressed with the content** thus far."

– Tiffany Gilsbach

Engagement

Detroiters' engagement with BridgeDetroit community town hall meetings and events has significantly contributed to the understanding of what matters most to Detroit residents. BridgeDetroit is committed to using this insight to inform its reporting and drive change in Detroit.

BridgeDetroit reaches thousands of Detroiters through its engagement efforts, which are not about the extraction of information, but the formation of deep, sustained relationships. It is an approach based on building relationships with Detroiters over time and building trust that leads to an ongoing exchange of information. BridgeDetroit's full-time engagement director coordinates all of BridgeDetroit's outreach and connections with Detroiters, collects and organizes data about their priorities and concerns, and helps reporters and editors place that information at the center of their work.

BridgeDetroit's engagement model gives Detroiters multiple touchpoints for interaction with the organization and its staff. These inputs are designed to build relationships with a broad spectrum of Detroiters, and the efforts are focused on reaching Detroiters who live in poverty and/or are disconnected from traditional channels of news and information.

In 2023, engagement activities included:

- Large-scale community meetings (six in 2023 alone, in different parts of the city, each focused on a specific issue).
- Door-to-door canvassing (3,000 doors knocked in 2023) to reach disconnected residents.
- A phone line and email address dedicated to readers to share their issues and concerns. Average response of about a dozen calls and emails per week.
- Town hall discussions, in collaboration with community organizations, to harness their connectivity to neighborhoods and Detroiters.
- Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok) where 19,000 followers have another touchpoint for reaching staffers and providing tips.



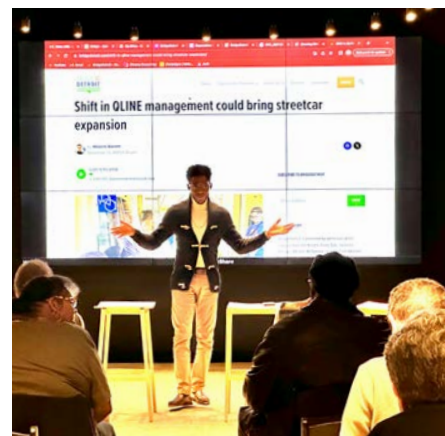
The BridgeDetroit newsroom convened a community conversation on an issue that's crucial for many Detroiters: housing. (Photo by Valaurian Waller)



Reporter Jena Brooker delivering fact sheets related to her recent reporting. (Photo by Jena Brooker)



Reporter Malachi Barrett provides a weekly recap of Detroit City Council news in his blog and on the Lavonia Perryman Show. (screenshot)



Engagement Director Orlando Bailey welcomes concerned residents to a Community Conversation on transit-related issues on Dec. 19, 2023 at Chroma Detroit. (Photo by Laurén Abdel-Razzaq)

Awards

Society of Professional Journalists – Detroit Chapter

- **Racial Justice Reporting** - Fourth place, Olivia Lewis, [Birth Detroit helps Black moms take control of their birthing experience](#)
- **Social Media Strategy** - First place, Jena Brooker, Bryce Huffman, Orlando Bailey and Malachi Barrett, Engaging Detroiters.
- **Community/Local News Reporting** - First place, Daphne Hughes, Stephen Henderson, Catherine Kelly, Malachi Barrett and Bill Kubota, Detroit Public Television, [Detroit Home Repairs](#)
- **Community/Local News Reporting** - Third place, Daphne Hughes, Stephen Henderson, Bill Allesee, AJ Walker, Orlando Bailey, with Detroit Public Television, [The Black Church in Detroit](#)
- **Collaborative Coverage** - Second and third place for Nushrat Rahman for her work with BridgeDetroit, the Detroit Free Press and Report for America on economic mobility.

Webby Award

Winner: Video - Public Service & Activism with NBC News Digital, [A Detroit neighborhood stands in the shadow of a segregation wall built 80 years ago](#)

Michigan Emmy Award

[The Black Church in Detroit: One-Year Anniversary Special](#), with Orlando Bailey and Stephen Henderson.



Bethany Howard's family has lived in the East Canfield neighborhood for generations. She has childhood memories of the devastating impacts of the Chrysler plant expansion. She's fearful of history repeating as the automaker, now Stellantis, continues to build its footprint in her community and rack up emissions violations. (Photo by Nick Hagen)

Fellowships

Micah Walker, National Press Foundation Widening the Pipeline 2023 Fellowship

Reporter Micah Walker was chosen as one of 25 journalists of color who were provided professional development, classes and support. Among the offerings: veteran editors and journalists leading discussions about how to navigate racism and sexism in newsrooms.

Note: BridgeDetroit/Detroit Free Press reporter Nushrat Rahman was chosen for the [2024 fellowship cohort](#).

Jena Brooker, 2022-23 National Science-Health-Environment Reporting Fellowships

Reporter Jena Brooker was one of 12 journalists chosen to receive the National Science-Health-Environment Reporting Fellowship, which allowed her to participate in niche workshops and customized webinars, to attend national conferences, and access to unique resources and professional mentors to assist with career development. It also kicked off her partnership with Climate Central, which led to [her story on climate change triggering worse allergies for people](#) and [her story on flooding in Detroit leading to toxic mold](#).

Jena Brooker, USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism 2022 Data Fellowship

Reporter Jena Brooker received the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism's 2022 Data Fellowship which resulted in her deep reporting on health and environmental racism related to Stellantis and the company's impact on neighborhoods on Detroit's east side.

“I wanted to lay out everything Detroit has given and sacrificed on behalf of residents for Stellantis in the name of jobs that might not be here to stay for long.”

– Jena Brooker

BridgeDetroit Reporting

BridgeDetroit's journalism begins with engagement — steady, multi-sourced, compiled feedback and interactions — and uses various streams of information to shape journalism that informs at the highest level.

It is an approach based on building relationships with Detroiters over time, and building trust with them that leads to an ongoing exchange of information. This is key in Detroit, where many residents feel used by media organizations, or looked past. It's not just that they don't see themselves or their lives reflected in news coverage; they literally feel no relationship with the people or organizations that produce that coverage.

Top community issues for BridgeDetroit reporting in 2023 included:

- Housing / Home Repair
- Civic / Community Information
- Politics / Policy
- Jobs / Economic Development
- Police / Public Safety
- Environment / Climate
- Health / Welfare
- Transportation
- Education
- Arts / Culture

The following are examples of the type of reporting being done at BridgeDetroit:

[The City Council Notebook, Malachi Barrett](#)

The City Council Notebook, an ongoing reporting project and weekly newsletter by Malachi Barrett, informs residents on the discussions and proposed ordinances that develop in City Hall. It gives Detroiters a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their health and well-being. It is unique because it takes complex and difficult to understand policies and politics, and makes them accessible to all residents.

[Detroit's cost for automotive growth: Generational displacement, Jena Brooker](#)

Reporter Jena Brooker took an in-depth look at how once thriving Black neighborhoods have been heavily damaged by automotive companies' expansions over the years.

[From shelter to home — how one woman climbed out of homelessness, Nushrat Rahman](#)

BridgeDetroit's in-depth coverage of housing insecurity and the unexamined challenges facing the unhoused in the city, ranging from the difficulty in securing housing vouchers to trying to get into a shelter. In 2023 Rahman spent six months following a family that



A Detroit City Council session that spanned more than six hours, primarily tied to discussions about tax abatements for the District Detroit development. (City of Detroit)



A residential block on the city's east side near the Stellantis facility. The plant has received numerous violations since its expansion in recent years and neighbors frequently raise concerns over the pollution and odors. (Photo by Nick Hagen)



Amanda Jordan, a leasing consultant, left, talks with Tonya Hogan after she fills out a housing application at the Carriage Park Apartments in Dearborn on Friday, Feb. 3, 2023. "Just the stress of everything is taking a toll on me physically and mentally," said Hogan who rushes to secure housing before her voucher expires on Feb. 13. "I am however trying to keep positive about everything." (Photo by Sarahbeth Maney, Detroit Free Press)

had a crisis push it to homelessness and chronicled their journey back. It told a story about poverty and recovery in Detroit that had not been told before. Her reporting highlights how these challenges impact Detroiters’ lives and the emotional toll on the unhoused.

[Detroit police say ShotSpotter is worth the cost, despite few arrests,](#)
Malachi Barrett

BridgeDetroit’s ongoing reporting on Shotspotter, the controversial surveillance technology deployed in Detroit has received criticism from residents, activists and police oversight officials.

[What happens when a court officer comes knocking during an eviction?,](#) **Nushrat Rahman**

One of the ways BridgeDetroit seeks to serve Detroiters is by asking them what big questions they have and then providing guides to explain how to handle problems and difficult situations. This piece by Nushrat Rahman is a prime example of this type of explanatory journalism. For many people who get evicted, it comes as a shock and without preparation. This guide provides answers to questions for those in the community up against this challenge. It also follows along with her overall coverage of housing issues for Detroit residents, including [low-income housing challenges](#).

[Detrouer Willie Mae Gaskin is ‘mother of the east side’,](#)
Micah Walker

Micah Walker was hired in 2023 to cover education and arts and culture. It’s an unusual mix of assignments, but creation of her role is a direct response to feedback from Detroiters. They told BridgeDetroit that one of the profound gaps in coverage of their communities is “joy,” or news about the city’s rich cultural amenities and experiences. This piece on 89-year-old community activist Willie Mae Gaskin came about because she kept showing up to BridgeDetroit’s Community Conversation events. The team recognized that there was a story here highlighting the life of someone truly working toward a more positive community.



The vast majority of shootings detected by a controversial police surveillance tool do not result in an arrest, but Detroit Police insist that ShotSpotter listening devices are driving down shootings this year. Detroit Police Department Crime Data Analytics Director Stephen Lamoreaux, left, and Deputy Chief Franklin Hayes, right, address City Council during an Oct. 16, 2023 meeting. (Screenshot | City of Detroit Livestream)

Audience Highlights

45%
Growth in Newsletter Subscribers

123%
Growth in Unique Visitors

Audience	2020 (Partial Year)	2021	2022	2023
Newsletter Subscribers	4,992	9,856	20,700	30,011
Unique Visitors	90,933	229,889	332,304	740,569
Average Monthly Unique Visitors	12,136	20,391	22,651	38,037



Funders

- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
- DTE Energy Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Google News Equity Fund
- Google LLC
- Hudson-Webber Foundation
- Institute for Nonprofit News
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- Joyce Foundation
- Kresge Foundation
- McGregor Fund
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- Skillman Foundation
- Kathryn Vizas
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Financial Support

	2020 <i>(Partial Year)</i>	2021	2022	2023
Supporting Members	426	495	549	562
Total Donations	\$30,160	\$52,746	\$58,486	\$56,961
Average Household Annual Donation Size	\$71	\$107	\$102	\$100

Partnerships

From the start, BridgeDetroit's mission leaned heavily into collaborative work. The goal has been to leverage the power of combined resources and to focus other newsrooms on the kind of engagement-driven journalism BridgeDetroit was created to pursue. BridgeDetroit's partnerships are a fundamental part of the work — seamlessly integrated and consistently producing great journalism. These partnerships take many forms and remain flexible to maximize the possibility of working with as many organizations as possible.

Detroit Free Press

Detroit Free Press: BridgeDetroit shares reporter Nushrat Rahman with the Detroit Free Press, the largest for-profit news organization in the city. Covering economic mobility, one of Detroit's most critical issues, Rahman works out of both newsrooms and taps into BridgeDetroit's engagement efforts for guidance and direction.



Detroit Public Television: BridgeDetroit has a standing, funded partnership with Detroit Public Television through several projects. The 40-year-old public affairs show, *American Black Journal*, regularly produces segments with Engagement Director Orlando Bailey. Another three-year project that focuses on the critical role of the Black church in Detroit scored an Emmy nomination in 2023. Detroit Public Television and BridgeDetroit also co-host forum discussions and community meetings to help build engagement with both organizations.



WDET and Eastside Community Network: A long-term partnership with WDET, Detroit's public radio station, focuses strongly on the production of the podcast "Authentically Detroit," a project of another BridgeDetroit partner, the Eastside Community Network. The weekly show focuses on issues, and features guests whose ideas and concerns come through Eastside Community Network and BridgeDetroit's engagement efforts.



Planet Detroit: A growing partnership, the Planet Detroit newsletter and website focus on the environment and environmental justice issues. The two organizations share story-planning meetings and cross-edit content, having evolved beyond content sharing. Planet Detroit is now housed in the same physical space as BridgeDetroit.



Chalkbeat: The education-focused nonprofit newsroom Chalkbeat Detroit shares education reporting and editing resources with BridgeDetroit. BridgeDetroit's reporter adds to Chalkbeat's reach, while Chalkbeat's editors, who have more experience managing education stories, help with guidance and growth for BridgeDetroit's reporter.

What Our Readers Are Saying

"I really **enjoy your journalism**. It doesn't feel overly glamourized, but really **authentically Detroit.**"

– Adrea Simmons

"I very much enjoy reading your articles. **Keep up the good work.**"

– Edsel Ford II

"I believe that **BridgeDetroit has changed the landscape of journalism in Detroit** and is a tool I use."

– Yolanda Jackson

"Bridge features stories that aren't covered in other local media and I have an **immense respect for Stephen Henderson's reporting** and his style of respectful interviewing on WDET."

– Beulah Bartus

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