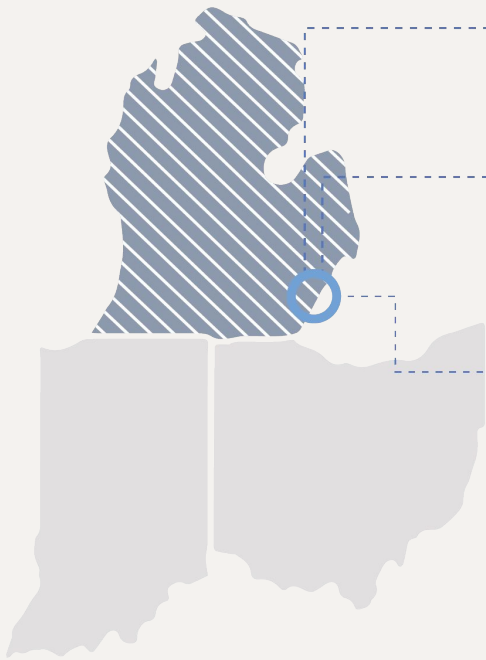


---

# Detroit, Michigan

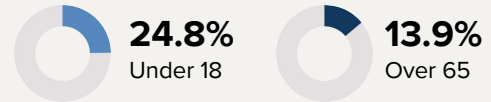
# Detroit, MI



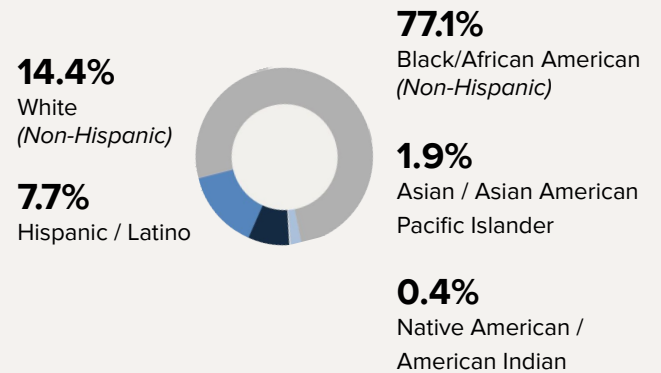
## Detroit, MI

**632,434** (2021 ACS)

### Age



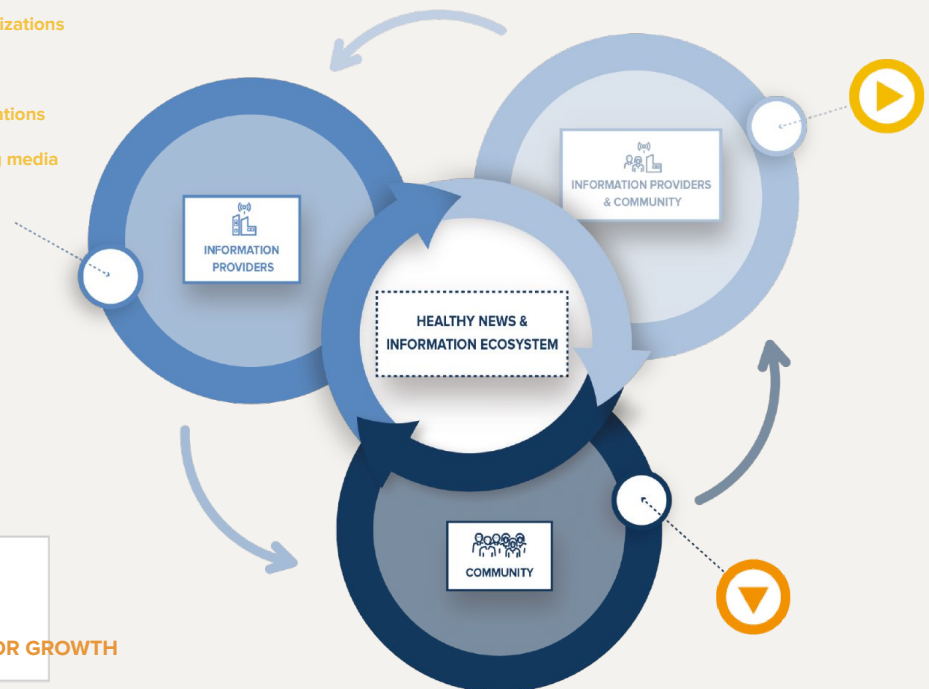
### Race



## News & Information Ecosystem 2022

- Number of journalism organizations
- Types of media
- Business models of organizations
- Diversity and BIPOC-serving media
- Collaboration
- Journalism funding

	<b>STRONG</b>
	<b>AVERAGE</b>
	<b>OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH</b>



# Key Elements



Detroit has a high number of news organizations for its population, with high representation of independent for-profit print publications, nonprofit news publications and public media.



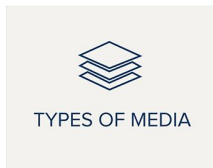
Detroit has seen recent robust collaborations, but they have not continued in an institutionalized way, as the Detroit Journalism Cooperative ceased operations in 2019.



*Detroit Free Press* records and reports on the racial demographics of its staff.



Detroit has a low number of BIPOC community media outlets; however, given the large Black population (77%), the identified audience of some newsrooms, especially nonprofit newsrooms, is oriented toward diverse sectors of the community.



Detroit is dominated by print media; however, digital media and public media represent significant components of its news ecosystem.



The majority of Detroit's journalism organizations are independent for-profit entities, but it has a significant number of nonprofits.



Philanthropic investment per capita decreased from 2020 to 2022; per capita philanthropic investment for the three years prior to 2022 was \$2.69, compared with \$4.48 for the three years prior to 2020.



The community in Detroit has relatively negative sentiments about their local news media; strengthening this relationship is crucial to bolstering the future of the ecosystem.

## Summary

Detroit is home to 632,434 residents and is the 14th-largest city in the United States and the second-largest in the Midwest and Great Lakes region (behind Chicago). While the population of the metro area has remained stable, the population in the city of Detroit has declined 5.6% since 2020, from 670,031 to 632,434 residents. Detroit’s population is 77% Black or African American, 14% white, and 8% Hispanic/Latino. Detroit is part of the Detroit-Warren-Dearborn metropolitan statistical area, which has a total of about 4.4 million residents.<sup>1</sup>

Detroit scores low in economic and education indicators. The median household and per capita income figures are both well below the national average, and Detroit’s 33.2% poverty rate is almost three times the national rate of 11.6%. The percentages of the population to achieve a high school education or bachelor’s degree is also lower than the national average, although in both cases they are about two percentage points higher than in 2020.

Since 2020, Detroit has seen an even more marked improvement in terms of technology and infrastructure. The percentage of households with computers is below the national average, but for Detroit it has risen just over six percentage points since 2020. The growth of households with broadband access is even more drastic, rising 12.9 percentage points, from 59% to 71.9%. This growth outpaced the seven-percentage-point rise in broadband access in the United States as a whole. This increase in household connectivity is likely the result of a combination of efforts, including the [Equitable Internet Initiative](#) (supported by the Knight Foundation) and city initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

Community Indicators	National Average, 2021	Detroit Baseline, 2020	Detroit, 2021	Trending
<b>Economics</b>				
Median Household Income	\$69,021	\$29,481	\$32,498	Improving
Per Capita Income	\$37,638	\$17,338	\$19,569	Improving
Poverty Rate	11.6%	36.4%	33.2%	Steady
<b>Education</b>				
High School Degree	88.9%	80.0%	81.9%	Steady
Bachelor’s Degree	33.7%	14.6%	16.4%	Steady
<b>Resources &amp; Infrastructure</b>				
Households with Computer	93.1%	79.4%	85.7%	Improving
Broadband Access	87.0%	59.0%	71.9%	Improving
Universities	20	12	12	Steady
Population per University	32,690	55,836	52,703	Improving
Libraries	27	22	22	Steady
Population per Library	23,693	30,456	28,747	Improving
Community Satisfaction <sup>3</sup>	60.9%	60.4%	55.0%	Declining
Voter Turnout of most recent election	66%	41%	33.8%	Declining
Prior Information Needs Study	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	
Prior Ecosystem Study	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	

1. “Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI Metro Area,” Census Reporter, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US19820-detroit-warren-dearborn-mi-metro-area/>.  
 2. Mayor’s Office, “Mayor, Human-IT Launch New Effort To Help Close Detroit’s Digital Divide, Reduce e-waste, Create Jobs,” City of Detroit, <https://detroitmi.gov/news/mayor-human-it-launch-new-effort-help-close-detroits-digital-divide-reduce-e-waste-create-job>.  
 3. Community satisfaction is measured by Share Care in partnership with Boston University, <https://wellbeingindex.sharecare.com/interactive-map/?defaultState=MI>.

Detroit has a relatively robust media ecosystem, with a strong public media station, a newspaper, and a robust nonprofit sector. However, given the economic and demographic differences of Detroit's city proper that is majority Black and experiencing high poverty rates, compared with the surrounding suburbs, which are majority white and more affluent, media has often catered to the information needs of suburban residents given the incentive structure to serve potential paying subscribers and those with greater purchasing power to appeal to advertisers. However, newer organizations, like Outlier Media, have identified this as a problem and are actively working to meet the information needs of all Detroit residents. With a history of collaboration through the now defunct Detroit Journalism Collaborative, news organizations continue to find ways to share content and work together to better serve all sectors of the community.

## Information Needs

When considering consumption of daily newspapers, data from the Alliance for Audited Media indicates that the household penetration rate for the print editions, print replica and nonreplica editions of *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* stood at 2.7%, the lowest figure among all Knight cities, though this data doesn't include the *Detroit Free Press's* Sunday edition.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that residents are not getting adequate news and information from print publications.

According to the Gallup/Knight American Views survey conducted in 2020 and 2022, TV sources are where most Detroiters get their daily news, although this decreased from 71% of respondents in 2020 to 43% of respondents in 2022.<sup>5</sup> When asked the extent to which local news organizations deliver the information they need, respondents were split roughly into thirds with just over one third agreeing (36%) that news organizations deliver information, 30% being neutral and 40% disagreeing.

One information provider looking to reach Detroiters directly is Outlier Media, a nonprofit based in Detroit. Outlier originally conducted a community information needs assessment when it launched in 2016. In April and May of 2022, Outlier conducted a new information needs assessment, employing its updated methodology.<sup>6</sup>

---

4. Daily average circulation is a composite average based on data from Alliance for Audited Media, which includes the daily average for four reporting dates for 2019 and two for 2021. Household penetration rate is the average daily circulation divided by the number of households in the Detroit MSA, according to the Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).

5. Responses to the Gallup/Knight American Views Survey are not statistically significant for Detroit and instead can be considered information to be analyzed together with other data sources. In 2020, there were 298 respondents in Detroit; in 2022, there were only 79 respondents from Detroit.

6. Outlier Media, "Information Needs in Detroit" (June 2022), [https://outliermedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Detroit-Information-Needs-2022\\_Final.pdf](https://outliermedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Detroit-Information-Needs-2022_Final.pdf)

Outlier looks for “resource gaps” in data, which are times when there is a material need that is not being met, by pulling from datasets like 911 response times, property code compliance, municipal spending and calls to United Way’s 211 service. They also ask people directly about the challenges they face and the information they both have and need. In 2022, this took the form of a community survey distributed through Outlier’s text-message-based information service. Outlier has utilized this SMS service since 2017, and in 2021 reached more than 60,000 residents of Detroit city proper, according to Erin Perry, Outlier’s managing editor.

Through this assessment, Outlier surfaced resource and information gaps in Detroit, nearly all of which are connected to the city’s low median income and high rate of poverty. For example, unemployment rates remained higher in Detroit than in Michigan as a whole and residents said they lacked information about how to access benefits as well as about job opportunities, and 65.8% of households in Detroit make less than a “living wage” (\$34,000 for a single person), as defined by researchers at MIT.<sup>7</sup>

Another challenge facing Detroiters is housing, from the rising cost of housing and eviction to poor housing quality and blight. Outlier surfaced housing as a challenge in its original information needs assessment and continues to cover this issue.

## Information Providers

The number of information providers in Detroit’s news ecosystem has remained steady since 2020, with 44 information providers identified. There’s a robust presence of nonprofit media, including Chalkbeat and Outlier Media. “Detroit in its inherent nature is very entrepreneurial, local landscape is very strong, resilient, and there’s been significant growth in the last five years,” said Harmony Rhodes, program officer at the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, citing its role following the Grand Bargain in 2014 and its focus on a narrative shift in the city.

A notable change took place in the ecosystem in early 2022 when Detour Detroit, a digital news outlet covering Detroit’s communities with equitable journalism via daily newsletters for Detroiters, joined Outlier Media.<sup>8</sup> Outlier Media has been a model organization for community-centered journalism, using a direct-to-consumer distribution model (via SMS) to provide critical information to meet community members’ needs. By merging Detour Detroit into the organization, Outlier Media added new avenues for reaching audiences, such as digital text and newsletters.

---

7. Living Wage Calculation for Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/19820>

8. Detour Detroit, “Detour Detroit joining with Outlier Media to grow the future of independent local journalism in Detroit,” (March 2022). <https://detourdetroit.com/detour-detroit-joining-outlier-media/>

# BIPOC-serving media

Detroit has five news organizations that specifically serve a racial and/or ethnic community, two of them directed at the Black and African American community. While this is low considering the overall size of Detroit’s Black and African American population (77%), for a city like Detroit, organizations that aren’t explicitly serving a racial or ethnic community do not necessarily have a default white audience, as might be the case for other ecosystems.

For example, Outlier Media has a staff that is reflective of the city’s population and has developed engagement and distribution strategies with low-income Detroiters as its core audience. Thus, while it might not be captured in the number of BIPOC-serving media news outlets, Detroit does have a robust presence of organizations striving for equity.

Information Providers	Knight Communities Average, 2022	Detroit Baseline, 2020	Detroit, 2022	Trending
Number of Organizations (newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and digital)	34	44	44	Steady
Population per Organization	27,162	15,228	14,374	Improving
Daily Average Circulation (Major Daily)	N/A	74,462	47,009	Declining
Penetration rate	15.2%	-	2.7%	
<b>Platform Breakdown<sup>9</sup></b>				
Newspapers	36.8%	52.3%	52.3%	Steady
Television Stations	31.3%	13.6%	13.6%	Steady
Radio Stations	10.9%	9.1%	9.1%	Steady
Digital only	18.5%	22.7%	22.7%	Steady
<b>Business Models Breakdown<sup>10</sup></b>				
Nonprofit	11.2%	15.9%	15.9%	Steady
Public Media	11.5%	6.8%	6.8%	Steady
National Broadcast Chain	24.4%	13.6%	13.6%	Steady
National Newspaper Chain	6.0%	4.5%	4.5%	Steady
Independent For-Profit	46.4%	59.1%	59.1%	Steady
<b>BIPOC-Serving Media</b>				
African American / Black		3	3	Steady
Hispanic / Latino		2	2	Steady
Asian / Asian American			0	Steady
<b>Diversity</b>				
Staff Diversity Transparency		2		
Source Diversity Audits		0	0	
Collaboration		Developed and institutionalized	Developed and institutionalized	
<b>Journalism Funding</b>				
Philanthropic Dollars over the 3 previous years <sup>11</sup>	\$3,837,794	\$3,000,000	\$1,700,000	
Funders	13	13	7	
Recipients	8	7	5	
Invested Per Capita	\$5.94	\$4.48	\$2.69	Declining

9. The percentage of news outlets that publish on specific platforms in Detroit.

10. The percentage of news outlets that have specific business models in Detroit.

11. Philanthropic investment is based on the Media Impact Funders and Candid database, which pulls data from organizational 990s. These data include only institutional funders, not individual donors. There is also a lag in the data as a result of both the timing of organizations’ tax filings and the process of tagging grants. While this data is far from perfect, it is the only current data source with respect to philanthropic funding for media.

# News Outlets Based in Detroit

	Independent	National Chain	Nonprofit/University	Public Media
<b>Digital only</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deadline Detroit</li> <li>M Live</li> <li>Michigan Chronicle</li> <li>Voice of Detroit</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bridge Detroit</li> <li>Chalkbeat Detroit</li> <li>Detour Detroit</li> <li>Outlier Media</li> </ul>	
<b>Print and digital</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertiser Times</li> <li>Arab American News</li> <li>Between the Lines (PrideSource)</li> <li>BLAC Detroit Monthly</li> <li>DBusiness</li> <li>Crain's Detroit Business</li> <li>Detroit Business Monthly</li> <li>Detroit Jewish News</li> <li>Detroit Legal News</li> <li>Detroit Metro Times</li> <li>Detroit Native Sun</li> <li>Detroit News</li> <li>Hamtramck Review</li> <li>Heritage News</li> <li>Hour Detroit</li> <li>Italian Tribune</li> <li>Latino Press</li> <li>Michigan Korean Weekly</li> <li>News Herald</li> <li>Nuestro Detroit</li> <li>Telegram</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detroit Free Press</li> <li>Garden City Observer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South End</li> </ul>	
<b>Radio</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WWJ - Radio</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michigan Radio</li> <li>WDET</li> </ul>
<b>Television</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WDIV</li> <li>WJBK</li> <li>WMYD</li> <li>WWJ - TV</li> <li>WXYZ</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detroit Public Television</li> </ul>



## Diversity

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the *Detroit Free Press*, along with other Gannett papers, committed itself to “increasing the number of people of color working in our newsroom to better reflect our communities.”<sup>12</sup> In line with Gannett’s corporate vow, *Free Press* said its newsroom would be “at parity” with the community by 2025.

In 2022, *Free Press* reported that their staff demographics had “stayed flat” over the previous year, with one-third of staff identifying as persons of color.<sup>13</sup> They attributed this static position to turnover and the “opportunity to make some remarkable hires.” Since 2020, *Free Press* has increased its Black staff from 12% to 17% and its Asian staff from 8% to 11%. However, at the same time, Hispanic/Latino staff decreased from 3% to 2%.

In the Gallup/Knight 2022 American Views survey, 70% of respondents in Detroit said that the diversity of a news organization’s journalists is very or somewhat important when deciding which news sources or outlets to turn to. This suggests that it is worthwhile for newsrooms to continue to be intentional about their staffing decisions and work to ensure that their staff reflects the lived experiences of Detroit residents.

## Collaborations

While the Detroit Journalism Cooperative, formed in 2017, did not formally continue after 2019, robust examples of collaboration remain in Detroit. For example, in 2022, [Outlier Media produced a voter guide](#) in partnership with the Detroit Documenters<sup>14</sup> and with editing support from Michigan Radio. The voter guide was promoted by several local media outlets, including distribution to 1,200 newsboxes in Detroit ahead of the August primary by the *Detroit Metro Times*. Outlier also has a collaboration with *Detroit Free Press* whereby they share a joint reporter who works out of Outlier’s newsroom. This type of collaboration often emerges through informal monthly editorial sessions Outlier Media takes part in with other local outlets, said Erin Perry, managing editor of Outlier Media. Some of these relationships were forged through the Detroit Journalism Cooperative.

---

12. Peter Bhatia, “Diversity Matters. And the Free Press Itself Must Do Better,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 20, 2020, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/08/20/detroit-free-press-staff-diversity-inclusion/5607357002/>.

13. Peter Bhatia, “Diversity/Inclusion Is an Internal and External Responsibility at the Free Press,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 27, 2022, <https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/2022/07/27/free-press-diversity-report/10158356002/>.

14. Detroit Documenters is a collaboration with the City Bureau Documenters program, which trains local residents to cover city meetings and events and pays them to write news stories.

There's a feeling of intentionality in Detroit's news organizations around building a strong and healthy news ecosystem, but institutionalized coordination has not yet become a staple of the city, according to some stakeholders. Orlando Bailey, engagement director for BridgeDetroit, says the city's news ecosystem is still in the building phase. "Everybody is trying to build this engine, and trying to figure out what coordination looks like," he said, adding that the level of care among news entities is high but funding and incentives for coordination are not there yet, especially for nonprofit newsrooms.

## Local Journalism Support Organizations

The Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has been heavily involved in assessing and funding the journalism ecosystem in Detroit and the surrounding areas. In addition to its previous support for the no longer active Detroit Journalism Cooperative, the foundation also supports and manages the Detroit Journalism Engagement Fund, a \$900,000 partnership with the Knight and Ford Foundations to expand local reporting and more effectively involve community residents. In 2022, the Detroit Journalism Engagement Fund gave a total of \$208,333 to six organizations based in Southeast Michigan, which brings the total investment over the life of the fund to \$1.3 million. The fund, which was originally designed to be a two-year initiative in 2017, but extended following its success, "has been intentional in increasing engagement and breaking down silos, and incentivizing deep, genuine partnerships and collaboration with each other," said Harmony Rhodes, program officer of CFSEM.

## Information Providers and Community

Based on a 2019 Pew Research Center study, Detroiters' relationship with local media is weaker compared to the national findings. Among the metrics included here, the findings for Detroit are either on par with or lower than the national average. Most notably, only 44% said that local news "mostly covers the area where they live," which is seven percentage points lower than the United States as a whole.

In the Gallup/Knight American Views survey in 2022, nearly two-thirds of respondents in Detroit (63%) agree that local news organizations have the resources and opportunity to report the news accurately and fairly; however, only 26% agree that local news organizations care about the best interests of their readers, viewers and listeners, and only 24% agreed that they do not intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public.

However, in conversations with stakeholders, they suggest that these perceptions have more to do with residents’ views on traditional news outlets, like daily newspapers and television that are perceived as parachuting into communities and covering hot button issues, and less to do with community-centered information providers, like Outlier, Detour Detroit or Detroit Documenters, which have focused on trust-building and community engagement.

Information Providers & Community*	National Average	Detroit	
% Who say local journalists are in touch with the community	63%	62%	Average
% Who have spoken with a journalist	21%	21%	Average
% Who say their local news source mostly covers the area where they live	51%	44%	Low
% Who pay for local news in the past year	14%	11%	Low
<b>% Who say their local news:</b>			
Reports news accurately	71%	73%	Average
Keeps an eye on local political leaders	66%	64%	Average
Provides news that they use daily	67%	62%	Low
Covers news stories thoroughly	65%	68%	Average
Are transparent about their reporting	62%	56%	Low
Deals fairly with all sides	62%	64%	Average
Includes people like you in their stories	58%	56%	Average

*\*Data from 2019 Pew Research Center Local News Survey*

## Case Study: Making News Dynamic Again at BridgeDetroit

Launched in May 2020 amid the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, BridgeDetroit, a nonprofit community-focused news organization, found itself covering a community facing significant, immediate challenges. “Detroit was hit early and hard, we lost a lot of residents in March and April 2020,” said Catherine Kelly, executive director and editor of BridgeDetroit. “It made me understand the importance of being in media again—if tomorrow isn’t promised, there’s no more important work I can do than serving residents.”

BridgeDetroit has been intentional in its growth and evolution, ensuring both that the newsroom looks like Detroit and engages residents, through initiatives like its in-process [Community Priorities Model](#), which will use publicly available data and other information sources like surveys and focus groups to guide dynamic, responsive coverage of Detroit’s communities. Its second [Progress Report](#) in 2021 highlighted residents’ concerns on everything from the pandemic, to home repair, to government transparency, to food accessibility. At the 2023 Knight Media Forum, Kelly highlighted BridgeDetroit’s accountability-focused reporting on the American Rescue Act, ensuring residents had information on fund allocation and expenditure tracking.

A key feature for the organization, Kelly said, is that BridgeDetroit moves “at the speed of trust.” “In a community like Detroit, it takes a while, a long time of showing up and being present to earn trust. You earn that when they see their stories and priorities represented,” said Kelly.

## Opportunities

- **Institutional support:** Institutional investment in Detroit’s news ecosystem (per capita) has decreased from 2020 to 2022. With the vibrancy of the nonprofit news sector in Detroit, there is opportunity for increased support.
- **Local backbone journalism institution:** Strong ecosystems often have a local backbone institution, and a backbone institution could help support collaboration across organizations and foster deeper community engagement and relationship building. Given the deep relationships in Detroit across news organizations and the examples of successful collaboration, a backbone institution could help to further develop collaborative opportunities and networks to better serve Detroiters.