

**ANNUAL
REPORT**
2020

Taking on tomorrow,
together.

Our Mission



West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum promotes business practices and policies that advance climate leadership, community resilience, social justice and the creation of a circular economy. We accomplish this by providing education, resources and collaboration opportunities to businesses and institutions in the regions we serve.

Our Work



LEADING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

The Forum is Michigan's leading organization for beyond-compliance sustainability practitioners, with a membership program serving our region's most recognizable brands, largest employers and most innovative entrepreneurs, advocates and educators.



IMPROVING COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES

We serve partners and diverse stakeholders as a boundary organization committed to the development of practices, policies and partnerships that improve community resilience and equity.



CENTERING EQUITY

The Forum is a safe and impactful space for professional and organizational growth, the development of new relationships, and the co-creation of initiatives that enhance environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and social justice.



THE FORUM IN 2020

The events of 2020 reinforced the need for sustainability and sustainable business. WMSBF and its members are adapting to meet the needs of the communities and industries we serve. The future we've been preparing for is here. [#takingontomorrowtogether](#)



The Gluten Free Bar was the 2019 West Michigan Sustainable Business of the Year.



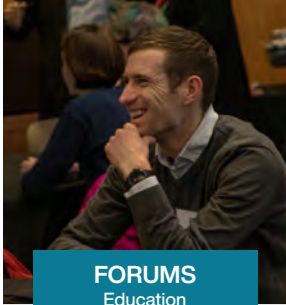
Visit wmsbf.org/members for a directory of current corporate and professional members.

The Forum celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2019 with a look ahead to the future of sustainable business in West and Southwest Michigan. We have provided an introduction to sustainability for hundreds of organizations and thousands of professionals over the years, hosting the most popular event program of its kind and a rotating portfolio of working groups and initiatives.

We now know that the work of our organization and its members will be judged by how we can impact the generational issues today defining our strategic objectives: climate change, racial and economic equity, and the need to develop a circular economy in our state.

The pandemic and other recent events have demonstrated the need for businesses and institutions to collaborate with each other and with the public sector to advance community resilience. We recently rewrote our strategic plan to formalize our commitment to this approach. You can read about our efforts in the pages that follow and at wmsbf.org.

Our Programs



FORUMS

Education
and Networking

Serving professionals and stakeholders in three regions and a virtual statewide program.

Learn more at wmsbf.org/events.



RESOURCES

Training
and Tools

Serving novice and advanced sustainability practitioners in business, government and the community. In English and Spanish.

Learn more at wmsbf.org/resources.



PROJECTS

Campaigns
and Initiatives

Outreach, advocacy, and collaboration opportunities developed through a working group and shared capacity model.

Become involved at wmsbf.org/groups.



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS was recognized with the 2020 West Michigan Triple Bottom Line Leadership Award. Learn more about sustainability leadership and the City of Grand Rapids at wmsbf.org/stories.



WEST MICHIGAN FORUM

Typically on the second Monday of each month. Live events this year featured the Sierra Club's Aaron Mair on the Green New Deal, an energy efficiency workshop, circular economy, and the Grand Rapids City Manager.



MICHIGAN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS FORUM

Nearly 1,500 participated in our new virtual program over a six-month period, with our climate leadership, campus sustainability and food recovery working groups now statewide initiatives.



MICHIGAN'S GREAT SOUTHWEST

Our flagship regional satellite is advancing sustainability in Berrien and Van Buren counties through monthly events, educational programs, technical support and advocacy. Serving 80 diverse members.



LAKESHORE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

Event program and engagement for Muskegon and Northwest Ottawa County, focused on community resilience, circular economy, climate leadership, environmental justice and industry.



ADNORIS “BO” TORRES was recognized with the 2020 President’s Award for contributions to the Forum.

Learn more about Bo, and meet our Staff and Board of Directors at

wmsbf.org/news.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sarah Chartier, President - Spectrum Health

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STAFF

Daniel Schoonmaker, Executive Director

Carissa Patrone, Equity Program Manager

Rose Spickler, Membership Manager

Circular Economy

We support and elevate efforts of local businesses and institutions working to create a circular economy in their communities and industries.

The Forum is West Michigan's leading advocate for recycling and solid waste diversion. We promote a circular economy mindset and the understanding that waste has economic value, providing support to businesses and organizations through our partnership program and educational engagements.

We are the only resource in the area for multicultural and bilingual recycling education, including engagement efforts that are helping to inform recycling contamination interventions and market development initiatives locally and statewide.

In 2020 we worked with partners to launch a project to eliminate single-use plastics in local Hispanic businesses, and to create a set of fact sheets on food donation liability.

Working Groups and Projects:

- Partnership Program
- Zero Waste to Landfill Advocacy
- Solid Waste Taskforce
- Western Michigan Food Recovery Council
- New Market Development Project for 2021 promoting use of Michigan-sourced recycled content
- MSW Valuation Studies



HAWORTH was recognized with the 2020 West Michigan Circular Economy Leadership Award. Learn more about circular economy and Haworth at wmsbf.org/circular.

Climate Leadership

Our Vision: Through business leadership, Michigan can eliminate net greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to a future where GHGs in the atmosphere are declining.

In a year already beset with climate impacts locally and abroad, the pandemic brought a renewed sense of urgency for climate action, highlighting how challenging it could be for businesses and communities to equitably reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Through our members and partners, we are advocating for climate leadership goals and promoting resources for refrigerant management, clean energy and other solutions to reduce emissions and sequester carbon.

In 2020 we partnered with the Environmental Defense Fund and the RE-AMP network to advocate

for climate leadership in the public sector. We partnered with municipalities in Berrien County to plan Earth Day activities as an introduction to sustainability, introduced PACE financing to new regions, and led a new collaborative effort among Michigan colleges and universities (Earth Day 50.5).

Working Groups and Projects:

- Climate Leadership Roundtable
- Campus Sustainability Collective
- Equitably Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled
- Berrien County Earth Day
- Climate and Resiliency Forums

A large red lattice crane is shown at night, lifting a white cylindrical nacelle for a wind turbine. The crane is illuminated by bright lights at its base, creating a starburst effect. In the background, another wind turbine is visible, and the ground is dark with some vegetation. The sky is black, and the overall scene is lit by artificial lights.

CONSUMERS ENERGY was recognized with the 2020 West Michigan Climate Leadership Award. Learn more about climate leadership in West Michigan and Consumers Energy's efforts at wmsbf.org/climate.

Equity and Sustainability

Sustainable business should center social and environmental justice, providing a mechanism for businesses and institutions to dismantle and support alternatives to white supremacy.

Sustainable business has a responsibility to work alongside under-resourced populations and communities of color to address historical disparate impacts affecting members of these communities due to public policy or market-based actions. We are highlighting the potential role of the business community as advocates for business practices and civic priorities that advance social and environmental justice. We are engaging businesses in an active process to identify and eliminate racism, while working to decrease barriers to participation in sustainability for diverse groups.

With initial support from the Wege Foundation, the Equity Program has become a signature initiative of the modern WMSBF, a model for white-led organizations in the state's sustainability movement. Our full Equity Statement can be found at wmsbf.org/equity. Some recent outcomes are on the following pages.

Working Groups and Projects:

- Equity and Sustainability
- Business Leaders for a Better Michigan
- CSR and Anti-Racism
- Resource Translation
- Environmental Justice Network



MERCY HEALTH PHYSICIAN PARTNERS

MERCY HEALTH was recognized with the 2020 West Michigan Corporate Social Responsibility Leadership Award. Learn more about CSR and Mercy Health at wmsbf.org/stories.



BEYOND SUBSIDY PLANNING PROJECT

Convened a group of local advocates, service providers and stakeholders to help chart a new course for emergency utility action focused on asset-based solutions and sustainability. A partnership with Kent County Essential Needs Task Force.



LA CAMPAÑA VERDE AND LATINX PARTNERS

Launched sustainability initiative in partnership with West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and 15 Latino businesses led by El Granjero Mexican Grill. Also hosted five events for Latinx community in 2020, three in Spanish.



CONVERSATIONS OF COLOR

On behalf of Sierra Club, engaged business leaders and community organizations on environmental justice and the Green New Deal, also creating an intentional space for people of color that would become the Greater Grand Rapids NAACP Environmental Justice Community Coalition.



SUSTAINABILITY AND COVID

Hosted 15 webinars that introduced thousands to the disproportionate impacts of pandemic and resilience needs. Documented outcomes from access and education provided to diverse business and community leaders.



EL GRANJERO MEXICAN GRILL was recognized as the 2020 West Michigan Person of Color-Led Sustainable Business of the Year. Learn more about the recognition and EL Granjero at wmsbf.org/stories.

Community Resilience

Regional and statewide networks that facilitate collective leadership on resiliency and equity through a mutually beneficial flow of information, expertise, and resources.

The Forum uses a boundary organization model that co-creates with other networks and initiatives, providing a value chain that enhances sustainability, resilience and civic engagement. Our projects advance institutional trust and collaboration, providing a common language for diverse stakeholders and competing interests.

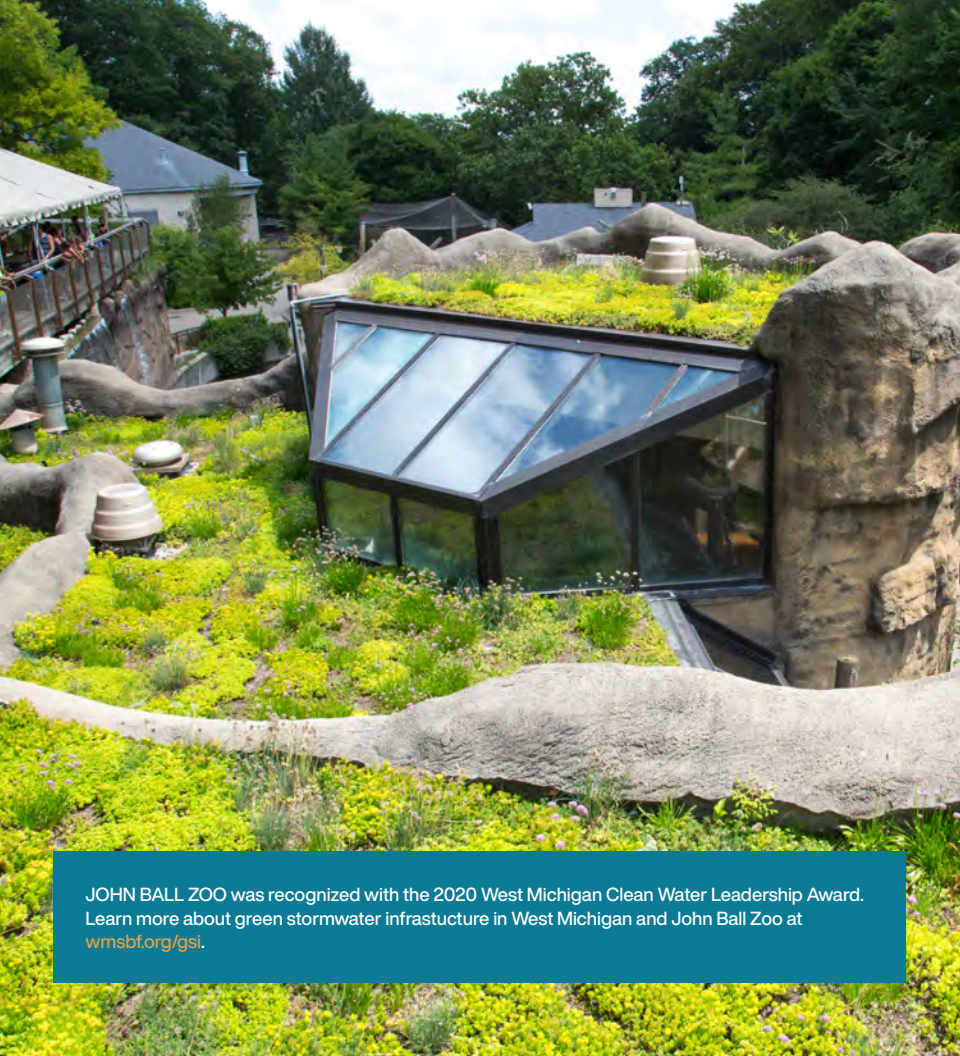
As one example, we are the region's leading advocate for the inclusion of climate science in business and municipal decision making. Our Adaptation Framework provides a climate adaptation toolkit that can be used for general resiliency needs.

In 2020 we hosted a series of live and online forums highlighting Michigan's current climate crises, programs on high water and public health that proved prescient. We promote green stormwater infrastructure, helping to improve relationships between local businesses and their subwatersheds.

In 2021 we will pilot a new resilience hub program with support from the U.S. Sustainability Directors Network.

Working Groups and Projects:

- Boundary Organization Projects
- Climate Adaptation
- Civic Engagement
- GSI Taskforce



JOHN BALL ZOO was recognized with the 2020 West Michigan Clean Water Leadership Award. Learn more about green stormwater infrastructure in West Michigan and John Ball Zoo at wmsbf.org/gsi.

West Michigan Sustainable Business Hall of Fame

A lifetime achievement award that recognizes extraordinary contributions to the growth of sustainable business in the West Michigan area over the course of a career.

Meet the 2020 inductees:

1. JAMES MOYER

Grand Valley State University

Managed facilities development for the university, helping to establish it as a leader in green building and sustainable stormwater management.

2. DENISE VAN VALKENBURG

HERMAN MILLER

Played a key role in establishing sustainable material use at the furniture maker and in its industry.

3. BILL GURN

HAWORTH

The driving force behind the manufacturer's zero waste to landfill efforts, a renowned champion for recycling in the region and state.

4. KAREEM SCALES

GREATER GRAND RAPIDS NAACP

Our 2020 Future Hall of Fame Award winner, honoring a local professional whose work deserves greater recognition.

1.



2.



3.



4.



Thank You to Our Sponsors

We would like to thank the businesses and institutions that have made our work possible this year through support of our Triple Bottom Line Bash and Forum Programs.

Program Sponsors



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wmrideshare.org



We think Sustainability is Awesome!

Brewery Vivant and Broad Leaf Local Beer
would like to congratulate all of the nominees!
Cheers! #beerthechange



Certified



breweryvivant.com

broadleafbeer.com



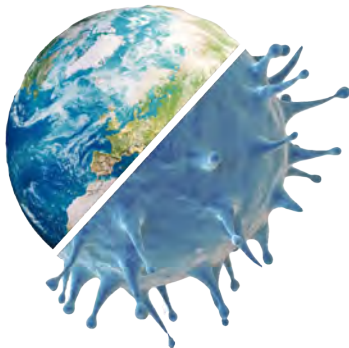
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or small the challenge,
we are all in this together.



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DRAIN COMMISSIONER

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EXPERIENCE
WE NEED &
THE VALUES
WE CAN ALL
AGREE WITH



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For your leadership
and commitment to
zero waste to landfill
over the last 40 years!



BILL GURN

*Manager of Facilities and Maintenance
and Operations at Haworth*

All in One

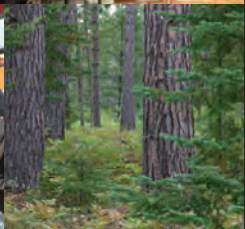
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Harnessing the power of business to create a more sustainable world

Delivering immediate, cost-effective and measured impact for your business



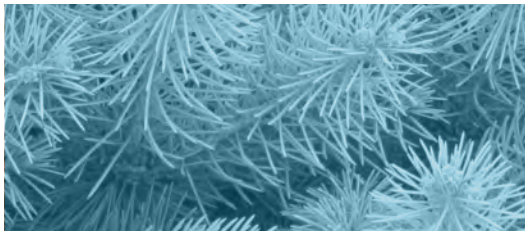
LEARN MORE

More information, including event and working group schedules, membership details and our 2020 fiscal year results can be found at wmsbf.org.

Contact us for more information

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naturalcapitalpartners.com



Learn more at: wmsbf.org

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