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Twenty years of promoting business practices that demonstrate  
environmental *stewardship*, *economic vitality*, and *social responsibility*.

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WEST MICHIGAN  
**SUSTAINABLE**  
BUSINESS FORUM



94-2014



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Friends,

Our 20th anniversary has been an exciting year in the making.

We have welcomed our first full-time director and dramatically grown our participation through exciting new programming, increased presence and focused initiatives. We will continue to offer unique learning opportunities and facilitate outcome-driven work groups and initiatives.

As newly elected board president, I am first honored to be given the opportunity and am excited to be a part of a reenergized and challenging group of individuals and businesses in West Michigan. It is the mission of WMSBF to promote business practices that demonstrate environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and social responsibility. Together, the collaboration and support we provide one another reinforces the demonstrated commitment of businesses in West Michigan to the triple-bottom line. The forum provides us with an unparalleled networking opportunity as well as a support system of unique, talented, driven people with a common passion.

It is through each one of us, the individual and organizational forum members, uniquely and collectively, that the forum is able to perform its work. It is through our continued efforts in sustainability, in the support of business growth and development, that we will sustain our presence in West Michigan, and our region's stature as a leader in sustainable business. Thank you all for your support and continued efforts in making our past, present, and future a success.



Carol Parsaca

*President, West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum*



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With the rise of the modern environmental movement in the second half of the last century, the nation began to take notice of the negative impact of certain business practices on the natural environment and human health. Regulations followed. In West Michigan, largely spared the malicious actions that gave rise to the activist movement, local businesses were forced to reconsider and often account for actions that had been routine and commonly accepted. Some reacted with animosity, making industry the many-headed villain of the environmental activist.

Others were more pragmatic, becoming proactive, even principled. Adjustments in practices, systems, and equipment to comply with regulations could be a large financial

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“New regulations affected many companies back then. They found out that they had unintentionally created a lot of unknown liabilities for themselves. A lot of people were struggling to figure out how to get ahead of the curve so that we wouldn't be playing catch-up.”

—Tom Fehsenfeld, *Crystal Flash*

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cost. Aiming beyond compliance toward more sustainable business practices could limit the risk of future regulations, and in many instances provide economic value back to the organization.

A select group was taking it even further, experiencing personal revelations about the role of business in environmental and social concerns. Emboldened by a West Michigan culture that prioritizes natural resources and the well-being of employees and the community, pockets of very forward thinking emerged locally, parallel to national efforts by large environmental organizations to organize corporate partnerships.



*West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum provided a platform for business, government and environmental activists to collaborate on key issues.*



One such forward-thinking professional, Bill Stough, held a seat on the board of West Michigan Environmental Action Council, the organization that led the charge locally for increased environmental regulation through the 60s and 70s.

With the concept of a collaborative effort between West Michigan leaders in mind, Stough approached the WMEAC board with a proposal for a subsidiary organization comprised of businesses with an interest in collaborating on business practices that were more environmentally and socially responsible.

“As I talked to people on the WMEAC board, the idea came up — why don’t we spin off a group within WMEAC? To my great surprise, the board passed it.”

### FOUNDING MEMBERS (1994)

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**“I think the idea that businesses and environmentalists cannot work together has been disproven.”**

— DAVID RINARD, STEELCASE



## HISTORY CONTINUED



Twelve original founding members agreed to join, each putting forward \$1,500 to establish a financial base for the fledgling organization. Early meetings between members featured the sharing of best practices and sustainable business techniques, as well as lengthy discussions about what direction the newly-formed “forum” should take. It was long, hard work.

Through it all there was a common thread: This forum should help organizations balance its impacts on people, planet and profit, the Triple Bottom Line. Members would focus on environmental concerns, but also on the impact their businesses and their efforts were having on their communities and society. Of course, any efforts undertaken by the group had to be financially feasible as well, preferably increasing the profitability of an organization.

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**“The ability to have a collective impact is something that this community does very well—there’s a collaborative spirit and a learning mentality.”**

*–Deborah Steketee, Aquinas College*

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The original members of West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum were first-generation sustainable business practitioners. There was no literature for sustainable industry. What little there was on the subject focused primarily on agriculture. With no best practices available, they began to create their own. Forum members were self-educated and entrepreneurial. They also put competitive differences aside to pursue common goals, as the forum played a key role



in facilitating the office furniture industry adoption of sustainable business practices. Informal knowledge sharing at forum meetings has quietly produced countless environmental and social outcomes for the region.

Work groups formed to attack key issue areas over the years, most prevalently the lack of a general entry tool for sustainable business understanding. Over the course of many months a cross-functional team of volunteers produced what would become the most impactful product of the organization, the Concise Guide to Sustainable Commerce. Commonly known as the Self-Assessment Guide, it allowed businesses from diverse industries to take a look at their practices, establish benchmarks and

**“We were that early in adopting these concepts. Our little old West Michigan forum was turning out stuff as good or better than what anybody else had going on.”**

*—Thomas Newhouse, TJN Design*

areas for improvement in sustainability, and measure improvement over time. The comprehensive guide proved to be a significant development-tracking tool for West Michigan and beyond: commercial development groups across the nation adopted the format for their own industry-specific self assessment guides as sustainable development grew in relevance through the past two decades. A guidebook for sustainable design followed, “Designing Products with Sustainable Attributes,” with an effort focused on affordable housing, “My Healthy Green Home,” some years later.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS 2013-2014

SAMUEL SHIROFF, Edelman

DAVID RINARD, Steelcase

DAN CARMODY, Eastern Market

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TRAVIS WILLIAMS, Outdoor Discover  
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BRETT LITTLE, Green Home Institute





## HISTORY CONTINUED

Of course the flagship forum program has always been its monthly meetings and annual conferences. The forum has offered approximately 250 professional development events in its history, educating thousands on best practices, emerging issues, and innovative thinking, playing host to a who's who of national scale experts, including both local talent and global name brands such as industrial ecology pioneer Ray Anderson, sustainable design innovator and Cradle-to-Cradle leader Bill McDonough, biomimicry expert Janine Benyus, and renowned environmental scientist Amory Lovins.



**“The vanguard of bringing business and environmental issues under one umbrella, and saying that these two aren't counterproductive to each other, but mutually beneficial to one another.” –Bill Stough, Sustainable Research Group**

As the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum began to develop its programming and efforts, its impact was felt through West Michigan's industrial cultures, especially in the fields of sustainable design and green building. The region's sustainability claims and green bona fides are well known. The forum deserves credit for making it acceptable, even mainstream, for local businesses and government to pursue such efforts.



The forum serves many different roles. There are the speakers and the knowledge. The work group projects. For some it is a networking venue, a means to meet peers, vendors or potential clients. But ultimately, the largest value of the forum through its first 20 years has likely been its ability to bring together disparate interests from business, government, education, and the non-profit world.

“One of the things we have to be proud of in West Michigan is that we were a real pioneer in initiating this dialogue between traditional environmentalists and the business community,” said Mark LaCroix, a long-time forum member and past president. “That wasn't very common.”





“There are plenty of people out there that may not be in powerful positions now that are motivated and interested and hungry for information on how to be economically viable and environmentally and socially responsible – they will be our future leaders.”

–Mark LaCroix, *The CarbonNeutral Company*

## FUTURE OF WMSBF

While the forum is celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year, in many ways it is still a start-up. The continuously evolving nature of sustainable business has forced the organization to regularly adapt its programming to stay relevant. Today there is a wide range of sustainable business interests and practitioners, both in terms of industry and level of expertise.

Where once the forum was largely populated by manufacturers and traditional polluting industries, its membership now ranges from breweries to landfill operators to architects to ArtPrize. Where the forum was once a platform for self-discovery, it is now a marketplace of ideas, discussion and problem-solving around sustainable business for diverse and sometimes competing interests.

The forum still serves the sustainability novice, but it also must meet the needs of the generation of practitioners and organizations that have built their careers or altered business models in pursuit of sustainability, not to mention the emerging third generation that has been specifically trained to focus on life cycle thinking and whole-systems thinking. Member colleges are producing students with skill sets customized to sustainable business. We are working to provide more customized resources to a wider audience, increasing linkages between members and generating conspicuous business outcomes for those involved.

The modern forum still serves as a mechanism for professional development, networking and tribe-building for practitioners and organizations, but it is becoming more and more a platform for

investments in shared capacity to address organizational, industry and community sustainability concerns. It is growing into its role as a “boundary organization” providing linkages between industries, governments, non-profit interests, and academia.

This renewed focus is seen readily in its recent Sustainable Business Practice Benchmarking Initiative and new Waste Task Force, both of which are funded by grants from the Department of Environmental Quality. Another key project is the Climate Resiliency Framework Initiative, a partnership with Michigan State University and Penn State University designed to help local organizations respond to climate change and similar concerns, such as resource scarcity. Other key initiatives include a new focus on sustainable food systems and diversity.

It has only been five years since the forum branched off from WMEAC, which served as a fiduciary sponsor for 16 years, and the organization is again starting to catch its stride. It hired its first full-time staff person last year, and is now ramping up for growth, with program revenue doubling year-over-year, event attendance more than doubling. New work groups are driving innovative and important ideas. New members and a new generation of member representatives are becoming fast leaders.

It is an exciting time to be involved with WMSBF. An exciting time for sustainable business in West Michigan.



*Over the past eight years the forum has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships and fellowships to local students. Pictured here are 2014 winners Jamie Sansone, Aquinas College; Kirk Rasmussen, Grand Valley State University; Youssef Darwich, Grand Valley State University.*

## WEST MICHIGAN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

This yearly honor recognizes the company that best represents the values of the triple-bottom line as defined by the mission of West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum. Through a blind vote, the WMSBF Board of Directors culled a list of 27 nominees to the five finalists below. The winner was chosen by a vote of forum members. It will be announced at the 2014 Triple Bottom Line Bash.



### AMWAY

Amway is one of the world's largest direct selling businesses. Founded in 1959, Amway's focus has been on helping people reach their potential. Through corporate social responsibility efforts, business opportunities, brands, and products, Amway's goal has been to help improve the lives of others. Through global social programs, such as the Amway One by One Campaign, and engagement with international NGOs, Amway reaches out and provides support to people across the world.



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FRED KELLER  
Founder and CEO  
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This lifetime achievement award honors individual practitioners that have made the greatest contribution to sustainable business in West Michigan during their careers. Finalists are selected by blind vote of the WMSBF board of directors. Winners are then selected by a vote of the full forum membership. Two or three individuals currently active in the West Michigan will be selected for recognition each year. One additional individual no longer active due to retirement or relocation will also be honored.



PAUL MURRAY  
Former Director of Environmental  
Safety and Sustainability  
Herman Miller



BILL STOUGH  
President and CEO  
Sustainable Research Group

The other finalists were:  
RENAE HESSELINK, Nichols  
TOM NEWHOUSE, TJN Design  
DAVE RINARD, Steelcase  
DEB STEKETEE, Aquinas College

They will automatically be on the ballot for 2015.

*Portraits by Shannon Mack.*

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum is funded through a combination of membership donations, grants, program fees and sponsorships. We provide three regular opportunities for members and other local organizations to sponsor our activities each year.

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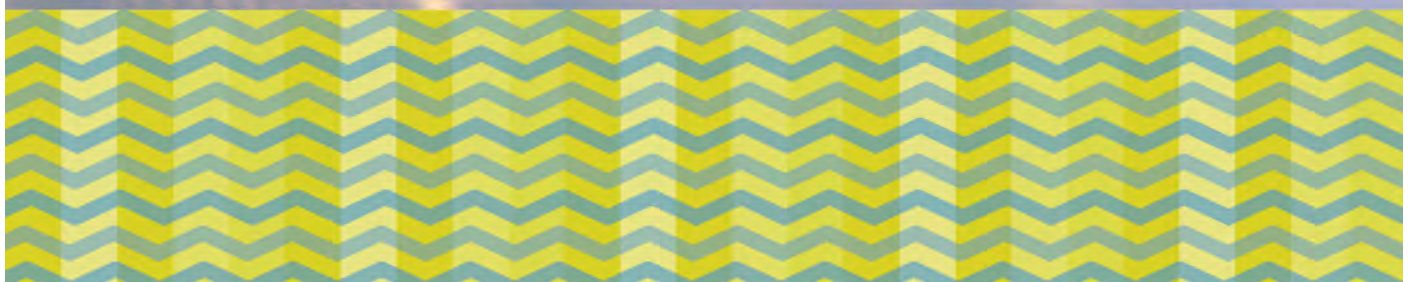
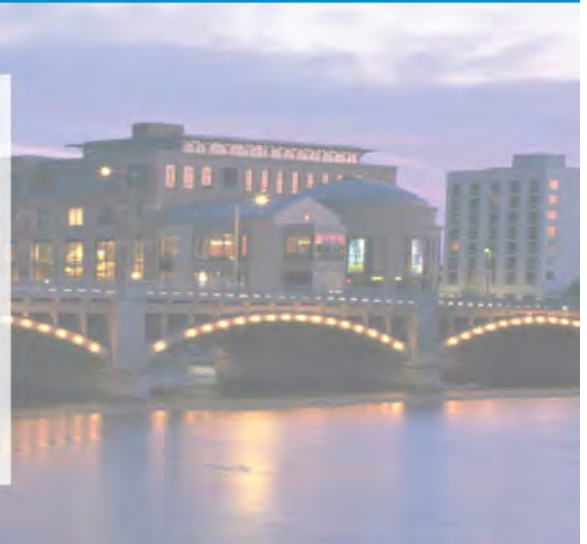
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On Behalf of SRG and its associates; Congratulations to the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum on its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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*Sustainable Research Group helps manufacturers, service companies, governmental and institutional organizations identify, document, and improve performance by working to improve their organization's ecological integrity, economy vitality and social equity.*



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Thank you to the interns, volunteers and contractors that have helped move the forum forward in 2014.

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And all of our many committee volunteers.

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alsgreensolutions.com

American Seating  
801 Broadway Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
800.748.0268  
americanseating.com

Ameriprise  
3333 Deposit Dr. NE, Ste. 105  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616.974.2253  
ameriprise.com

Amethyst Art Studio  
222 Diamond Ave SE #2  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506-1546  
616.788.2010

Amway  
7575 Fulton St. East  
Ada, MI 49355  
800.253.6500  
amway.com

Aquinas College  
1607 Robinson Rd.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616.632.8900  
aquinas.edu

ArtPrize  
41 Sheldon Blvd.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616.214.7911  
artprize.org

Asterisk Associates LLC  
1747 Woodward Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI. 49506  
616.856.6897

Bank of America/Merrill Lynch  
250 Monroe Ave NW Suite 600  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.774.4203  
bankofamerica.com

Barfly Ventures  
1 Ionia St SW Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616.451.HOPS

Bata Plastics Inc.  
1251 100th St.  
Byron Center, MI 49315  
616.452.5300  
bataplastics.com

Berkshire Hathaway Home Services  
3000 E. Beltline Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
616.318.6101

BIFMA International  
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Grand Rapids, MI 49504-5368  
616.285.3963  
bifma.org

BISSELL Homecare Inc.  
2345 Walker Avenue NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49544  
616.735.1418  
bissell.com

Busy Bea's Services  
2070 Waldorf  
Grand Rapids, MI 49544  
616.284.4000  
busybeas.com

Calvin College  
3201 Burton SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616.526.6000  
calvin.edu

The CarbonNeutral Company  
7551 Fase Street  
Ada, MI 49301  
616.682.4881  
carbonneutral.com

Cardno JFNew  
11181 Marville Ave  
West Olive, MI 49460  
616.847.1680  
cardnojfnew.com

Cascade Engineering  
3400 Innovation Ct  
Grand Rapids, MI 49512  
616.975.4800  
cascadeng.com

Catalyst Partners  
502 Second St. Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.454.1111  
catalyst-partners.com

The Christman Company  
208 N Capital Ave, Suite 400  
Lansing, MI 48993  
517.482.1488  
christmanco.com

Clothing Matters  
141 Diamond SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616.742.2818  
clothingmatters.net

Comprenew  
629 Ionia Ave SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.988.8282  
comprenew.org

Conestoga-Rovers and Associates  
200 West Allegan St., Suite 300  
Plainwell, MI 49080-1397  
269.685.5181  
craworld.com

Consumers Energy  
4000 Clay Ave. SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548  
616.530.4333  
consumersenergy.com

Control Solutions  
3501 Lake Eastbrook Blvd. SE, Ste. 300  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616.247.9422  
controlyourbuilding.com

Corp! Magazine  
27700 Hoover Rd.  
Warren, MI 48093  
586.393.8815  
corpmagazine.com

Covanta Kent  
950 Market Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.235.3210  
covantaenergy.com

Creative Dining Services  
1 Royal Park Drive, Suite #3  
Zeeland, MI 49464  
616.748.1700  
createdining.com

Crystal Flash  
1754 Alpine Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
800.875.4851  
crystalflash.com



CS Sustainable Design  
2070 Buttrick Ave SE  
Ada, MI 49301

Davenport University  
6191 Kraft Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49512  
616.698.7111  
davenport.edu

Dematic  
507 Plymouth Ave. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505  
616.913.6200  
dematic.com

Direct Trade Coffee Club  
222 Fountain St. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.635.4729  
dtcoffeeclub.com

Disher Design and Development  
201 West Washington Suite 230  
Zeeland, MI 49464  
United States  
231.675.4263  
disherdesign.com

Eco Metrics LLC  
1626 Sherman SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
616.241.6745  
ecometrics.biz

Environmental Resources  
Management, Inc.  
3352 128th Avenue  
Holland, MI 49424-9263  
616.738.7356  
erm.com

Faurecia Automotive  
217 E. 24th St.  
Holland, MI 49423  
616.392.4042  
faurecia.com

Ferris State University  
151 Fountain St SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.299.4927  
ferris.edu

Feyen-Zylstra, Inc.  
210 Front Ave SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.224.7707  
feyen-zylstra.com

Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr  
and Huber  
1515 Arboretum Drive  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616.464.3915  
ftch.com

Fulton Street Farmers Market  
1147 Fulton St.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.454.4118  
fultonstreetmarket.org

Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand  
Rapids  
3035 Prairie St. SW  
Grandville, MI 49418  
616.532.4200 x1121  
goodwillgr.org

Grand Rapids Community College  
Tassell M-TEC  
622 Godfrey Ave. SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.234.3811  
grcc.edu

Grand Rapids Downtown Market  
435 Ionia SW  
Grand Rapids MI 49503  
downtownmarketgr.com

Grand Valley Metro Council  
678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.776.3876  
gvmc.org

Grand Valley State University  
224B LOH One Campus Drive  
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616.331.5000  
gvsu.edu

Green Cell Foam  
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877.938.6738  
greencellfoam.com

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P.O. Box 946  
St. Joseph, MI 49085  
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hwmwu.org

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855 East Main Ave  
Zeeland, MI 49464  
616.654.3000  
hermanmiller.com

Holiday Inn Grand Rapids  
310 Pearl St NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.235.7611  
higrdt.com

Holland Board of Public Works  
615 Hastings Avenue  
Holland, MI 49423  
616.355.1658  
hollandbpw.com

Hurst Mechanical  
5800 Safety Dr.  
Belmont, MI 49306  
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hurstmechanical.com

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Zeeland, MI 49464  
616.748.1572  
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4090 Lake Dr. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
800.698.9493  
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Interface H2O  
10694 Chicago Drive  
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616.931.5584  
interfaceh2o.com

Intertek  
4700 Broadmoor SE Suite 200  
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616.656.7401  
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Kent County Dept. of Public Works  
1500 Scribner Avenue NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.336.3694  
accesskent.com

Kentwood Office Furniture  
3063 Breton Rd  
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616.957.2320  
kentwoodoffice.com

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keygreensolutions.com

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616.299.4927

Local First of West Michigan  
955 Wealthy St SE  
616.808.3788  
localfirst.com

Market Technologies  
P.O. Box 503  
Charlevoix, MI 49301  
616.723.6954  
mktec.com

Metro Health Hospital  
P.O. Box 916  
Wyoming, MI 49509  
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metrohealth.net

Michigan Energy Innovation  
Business Council  
120 N. Washington Square, Suite 805  
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517.853.2571  
mieibc.org

Michigan League of Conservation Voters  
Education Fund  
40 Monroe Center Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.459.6459  
michiganavedfund.org

MI Local Foodbeet  
220 Hollister Ave SE  
616.363.4016  
milocalfoodbeet.com

Michigan Works! of Kent and Allegan  
Counties  
1560 Leonard NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505  
616.336.4460  
michiganworkska.org

Midwest Energy Group  
5688 East ML Ave.  
Kalamazoo MI 49048  
616.928.8666  
midwesternenergygroup.com

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P.O. Box 828  
Jenison, MI 49429  
616.748.1955  
new-soil.com

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616.656.9720  
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5555 Brentwood Ave  
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616.784.USED  
odomreuse.com

Organicycle  
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616.855.3377  
organicycle.org

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Holland, MI 49422-1979  
616.396.6521  
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Allegan, MI 49010  
269.686.2564  
perrigo.com

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616.940.5558  
pilgrimmanor.org

Plummer's Environmental Service Inc  
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Byron Center, MI 49315  
616.318.5643  
plummersenv.com

Progressive AE  
1811 4 Mile Rd. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
616.361.2664  
progressiveae.com

Rapid Shred  
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616.791.4747  
rapidshred.com

Republic Services  
2471 Wilshere Dr  
Jenison, MI 49428  
616.662.6839  
republicservices.com

RecycleBoxBin (Morningbird  
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401 Hall St. SW.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.558.2515  
recycleboxbin.com

Restorative Lake Sciences LLC  
18406 West Spring Lake Rd.  
Spring Lake, MI 49456  
616.843.5636  
restorativelakesciences.com

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ricoh-usa.com

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601 First Street NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.285.6933  
rockfordconstruction.com

SecurAlarm Systems, Inc  
112 54th Street SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548  
616.773.6300  
securemichigan.com

Solar Winds Power Systems  
Shelbyville, MI  
616.635.7855  
thesolarwinds.com

Spectrum Health  
100 Michigan Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
866.989.7999  
spectrumhealth.org

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Kentwood, MI 49512  
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valleycityer.com

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varnumlaw.com

Wind Resources/Mackinaw Power  
414 East Main St.  
Lowell, MI 49331  
616.897.1305  
mackinawpower.com

## BECOME A MEMBER

Membership in West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum is on an annual, calendar year basis. Membership dues fund the vast majority of the forum's work. Members receive a profile page on [wmsbf.org](http://wmsbf.org), access to special educational and networking opportunities, the ability to promote events and happenings through our blog and newsletter, voting rights and more. Dues are a donation tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

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11-100 employees.....	\$300
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1,000 employees or more.....	\$750
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Regular WMSBF Monthly Membership Meetings occur on the second Monday of each month with some exceptions. A complete schedule of upcoming events can be found at:

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