

Detroit Public TV Returns to Its Roots, Moving Headquarters Back to Detroit

New Location and New Name Declare Its Commitment to Serving ‘The Most Important City in America’

DETROIT (April 16, 2024) – Detroit Public Television, the community-owned, nonprofit media organization that has served Southeast Michigan since 1955, announces plans to move its headquarters back to the City of Detroit as part of a new community media campus in the Milwaukee Junction neighborhood.

At the same time, it is changing its name to Detroit PBS, to demonstrate its decades-long commitment to engaging the community and to the standards of quality, trust and fairness that have been the hallmark of PBS.

The organization purchased the property at 234 Piquette Avenue, between John R and Brush Streets, where it will renovate and expand an existing building to serve as much more than a traditional television station. The campus will provide an ideally situated home for an organizational headquarters, video production and broadcasts, 90.9 WRCJ radio production and broadcasts, arts performances, journalism hub and community events space.

Detroit PBS's new building will uniquely combine features from leading public media facilities in Boston, Denver and Austin, showcasing innovation by integrating them all under one roof.

“Our return to Detroit represents the culmination of more than a decade of commitment to Detroit, which we believe is The Most Important City in America,” said Rich Homberg, Detroit PBS’s President and CEO. “We have been a leader in community engagement in the PBS system, and that is one of the reasons we have the most diverse viewership in the PBS system. The focus of our content and engagement starts in the city and then extends outward to the far reaches of Southeast Michigan, becoming a unifying force in the region.”

Detroit PBS expects to begin construction later this year, with an opening scheduled for Fall 2026. This announcement comes nearly 20 years after the organization announced a headquarters move to Wixom, driven by a federal mandate at the time to cost-efficiently convert to digital television broadcasting. However, broadcasts and other activities did not stop originating in the city. Over the past two decades, 90.9 WRCJ has continuously broadcast from Detroit, and significant television production has taken place in the city via studio partnerships and field production. The expanding journalism bureau has been stationed in Detroit, first at the Detroit Historical Museum and now at Marygrove, and the Education team’s various family workshops have been a welcome and regular fixture in neighborhoods throughout Detroit.

“There are very unique features that a modern media organization needs, and we found them in our new location, after touring dozens of sites in the city,” said Ollette Boyd, Detroit PBS’s chief operating and chief financial officer. “We’re going to bring new life to this building in a vibrant, growing neighborhood.”

Among this new life will be an even greater emphasis on serving the media needs of the region by providing a space for ongoing engagement with the community, including the type of feedback sessions that members of the One Detroit team have conducted for years in Detroit neighborhoods to learn what matters most to their residents. The organization plans to expand community programs like media mentorship and training to community partners to help them hone their messaging and distribute it effectively, with dramatic shifts in the media industry, it becomes more important than ever for community organizations to find ways to make their voices heard.

“This new space provides new opportunities in all of our mission pillars,” added Melissa Roy, the Chair of the Board of Trustees. “Education, arts and culture, journalism and public affairs, and energy and the environment will have room to grow and deepen engagement with our community via television, online and beyond.”

Additionally, alongside the announcement of the relocation, the organization reveals that its flagship broadcast channel, WTVS-TV, affectionately known as “Channel 56” for generations, and its other operations will undergo a transformation and be rebranded as Detroit PBS. This decision, informed by two years of audience research, underscores the station’s dedication to community engagement and building viewer trust.

Members of the public continue to say consistently that despite all that is new with their media habits, their respect and appreciation for PBS remains as strong as ever. In the most recent national research, mirrored by local viewer surveys, Americans say that PBS is the “most trusted” source of information for the 21st consecutive year. Viewers of all political stripes share trust in PBS and its member stations, especially those in the Detroit market.

“We learned through research that this audience is comprised of diverse, engaged members of our community with a passion for what this organization does,” said Charles Metzger, a Detroit PBS Trustee, who helped lead and oversee the naming effort. “The name Detroit PBS will quickly identify us to the audience that trusts us now, as much as ever.”

In addition to the rebranding to Detroit PBS, The Detroit Education Television Foundation, the 501(c)(3) entity that governs the organization’s operations, which include WTVS-TV, 90.9 WRCJ, multiple digital television channels, including the Michigan Learning Channel, and all of its online properties, along with national initiatives such as PBS Books, has changed its name to Detroit Public Media, to reflect the nature, beyond television, of the organization’s mission. Detroit Public Media is governed by a board of trustees comprised entirely of Southeast Michigan residents. The vast majority of the organization’s funding, approximately 70 percent, comes directly from community members who live in the region.

Detroit PBS is now associating the phrase, "Imagine the Possibilities," with its new name to communicate the power of its programming, platforms and community outreach. It serves as a positive affirmation and emotional connection to its community, especially the children who have long been inspired by PBS shows.

"Detroit PBS is renowned for its award-winning local programming and acclaimed PBS shows, a tradition that is paramount as we enter this new era," stated Roy. "The new name will provide a more connected brand in today's digital landscape, where viewing extends beyond traditional TV. By integrating apps, phones, tablets, and social media, we embrace this multiplatform world, ensuring Detroit PBS remains relevant now and in the future, while also leaving room for future innovations."

About Detroit PBS:

Detroit PBS is Michigan's only community-licensed public television station, operating independently of any educational institution or governmental entity. With more than 2 million weekly viewers across its five TV channels, Detroit PBS is the state's largest and most watched public television station, reaching the most diverse public television audience in America. Formerly known as Detroit Public TV, Detroit PBS reaches nearly 4 million visitors on average each month through its websites, YouTube channels and social media platforms. Its listener-supported radio station, 90.9 WRCJ, is Detroit's only classical and jazz station, reaching a local and worldwide audience and averaging 280,000 streams per month. Licensed to Detroit Public Media, Detroit PBS is governed by a volunteer board of trustees representing the local business, civic and cultural communities.