



Transforming public spaces for the health of people and our planet

EVERGREEN
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

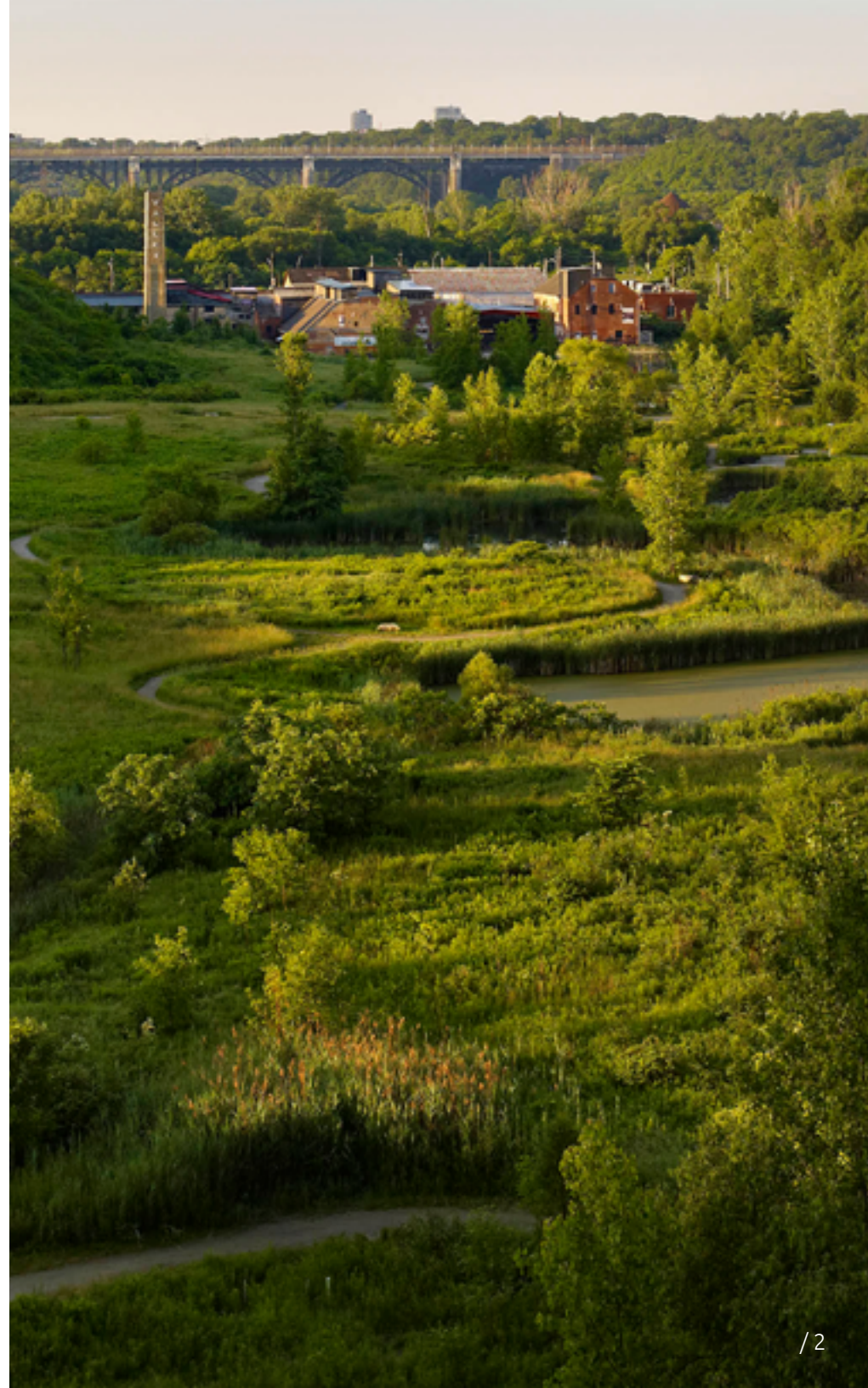
Photo courtesy of Morgan Yew

The Land and First Peoples

Before we launch into this report, we first want to begin by acknowledging the lands and waters, which connect us and make our work possible. The lands upon which Evergreen operates, and the built communities and cities across the country, are the traditional territories, homelands and nunangat of the respective First Nations, Métis Nations and Inuit who are the long-time stewards of these lands.

These are occupied lands and subject to inherent rights, covenants, treaties and self-government agreements to peaceably share and care for the lands and resources across Turtle Island. These regions are still home to diverse Indigenous peoples and we are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these lands.

The Evergreen Brick Works site is built on occupied Indigenous territory – the traditional homelands of the Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. The territory is governed by Treaty 13 and is subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek Confederacies and allies to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.





**Jennifer
Angel**
CEO

Letter from CEO

2023 was a year of regeneration at Evergreen. We engaged with partners and audiences, focused our strategy, and refined our value proposition. We rebranded to better represent our impact and values as an organization. In many ways this year was a return to our roots, and we've emerged with a renewed belief in, and commitment to, the importance of better public spaces in cities, for the health of people and the planet. Thank you for being part of this work which has never mattered more.

In our cities today, we're disconnected from what matters most: each other, our communities, and nature. Neighbours miss each other in the day-to-day, children play on screens more than they explore the outdoors, and once vibrant communities are reduced to networks of strangers — increasingly distrustful and polarized.

We often think of cities as concrete jungles, defined by streets, skyscrapers and subways rather than centres for social life, resilience and economy. Places where people and life disappear in the crowd. Despite 80% of Canadians living in cities, we are lonelier than we've ever been. As cities continue to grow, we have an opportunity to shape our cities of the future, a different future. We are at a pivotal moment, and this is precisely the time to imagine our potential. What if we built cities for the health of people and the planet first?

Infrastructure shapes the context for our lives. The places we create shape how we live, how we move and who gets to participate. Public spaces remain in the background, undervalued and underinvested, but their impacts are outsized and the evidence is clear. At Evergreen, we know that public places are boundless in their potential to reconnect us to what matters most. They can be the antidote to many of our most pressing challenges: climate, health and wellbeing, equity and belonging, and economy. And they can bring us together, strengthen our social connections and resilience and trust, and contribute to the conditions for resilience and change.

In the pages of this year's Annual Report, I hope you will see that change. A more focused organization, public spaces that work harder for more people, enhanced participation and partnerships across sectors and community, and a palpable momentum. I hope you will be challenged and also share in hope and joy that were highlights of 2023. From engagement with partners and community in project planning, place-based activations and events, to nature-based exploration and education for youth, to the development of AI mapping tools to help communities across the country to enable better land use decisions for climate resilience, we've been hard at work bringing people together and shaping better places.

With the support of people like you, private and corporate investors and leaders, government, and many amazing community partners and volunteers the team at Evergreen embraced 2023 with a focus to build cities that are bursting with life. Together we are taking action to empower communities, reconnect children to nature and improve community health and wellbeing and prepare our cities for a changing climate.

The seeds of a healthier tomorrow have been planted. Thank you for helping us nurture them to grow.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Angel', written in a cursive, flowing style.


Letter from Board Chair

I am honoured to be succeeding Helen Burstyn as Chair of Evergreen's Board of Directors. We are all extremely grateful for her wise, loyal and dedicated support to Evergreen over the past decade. I hope to build on her legacy and am excited to be of service to Evergreen as we work to fill our cities with places of joy and connection.

Evergreen's efforts in 2023 have strengthened our organization and our focus for greater impact. In this vein, I am particularly inspired by the work of our Climate Ready Schools program and the school grounds Evergreen has helped green across the country. At a time when kids are increasingly disconnected from the play and wonder of childhood in favour of their devices, and when our changing climatic conditions are adversely affecting their opportunity to play and learn outside, this feels urgent. Our focus on schools continues, and this year we have been actively nurturing relationships with school boards and funders to bring these extraordinary school ground transformations to more communities in Canada.

I'm also encouraged by the planning work unfolding in Toronto's ravines, which we are deeply engaged with. The ambition to bring more nature into Canada's biggest city, to provide better access to nature to more communities and to set an example for greener cities of the future is bold, rare and exciting.

I am very inspired by the team inside the organization as well as those partners, investors and volunteers who keep showing up to support us and contribute to making cities better, through better public space. I am proud to work alongside people who are committed to improving our lives, bringing new and old thinking to the problems we face and putting smiles on many faces every day. I hope these pages that follow bring a deeper understanding of our work and inspire you to connect with us, or at the very least spark a new idea from which we might all benefit. I look forward to working with you and Evergreen on better public places.



**Andy
Chisholm**
Board Chair



What your support made possible

Photo courtesy of Al Yoshiki

At Evergreen, we are dedicated to transforming public spaces to build a healthier future for people and our planet, but we can't do this alone. Here's a look back at 2023:



145,000+

visitors to our Farmers Market, supporting **101** local farmers and vendors.



12,170+

children and their caregivers enjoyed hands-on activities in the Children's Garden during Weekend Nature Play.



7,000

hours of service from over **550** volunteers who supported the launch of **5** new programs.



7,266

students participated in curriculum-linked outdoor education through our Visiting School Program.



480

skateboarders at
our community
drop-in sessions.



5,500+

people across Canada supported
with innovative housing solutions
through our Housing Supply
Challenge Support Program.



33,000

guests attended over
180 events at Evergreen
Brick Works



30

free Community Spotlight
Series performances
supported by **23** partners.



400+

participants at our 2023
Evergreen Conference, where
they learned the potential of
great public places.



\$2.4M

in direct sales contributed to
the local economy via
our markets at Evergreen
Brick Works



Short stories, longer impact

Our work can often start small and then increase in impact as it reaches and inspires others.



Photo courtesy of Al Yoshiki

In 2023, we developed a circular waste strategy onsite at Evergreen Brick Works. In November, we introduced a reusable dishware program at the indoor farmers market and we have diverted over 6,000 single-use items from landfill!



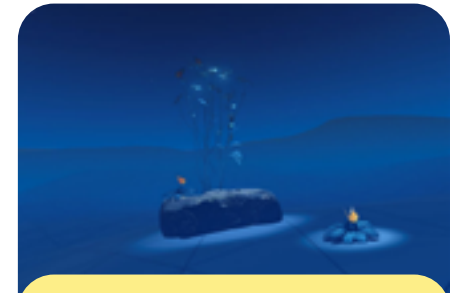
Photo courtesy of Al Yoshiki

High school students from the Native Learning Centre came and cared for to the Gitigaan Garden at the Brick Works. They planted, tended, and harvested food that was used by Elders to cook a community meal.



Photo courtesy of Marc Crabtree

Last year, our Housing Supply Challenge Support Program hosted a session at the Evergreen Conference for 135 participants (both in-person and online). This was an opportunity to explore several housing projects across the country, and how they demonstrate the vital role that intentional social infrastructure plays in healthy and vibrant living communities.



Evergreen's Institute of Public Art and Sustainability was proud to showcase Jawa El Khash's work, *Nature's Algorithm*. Through four digitally generated holograms placed around the historic brick presses of the Brick Works, visitors were able to catch glimpses of the plants and animals native to the land on which they stood, bringing both a message of hope and a call to action for future conservation efforts.



The transformative power of public spaces

Photo courtesy of Marc Crabtree

Public spaces connect us to what matters most. Last year, we offered an exciting range of programming to improve health and community wellbeing and created vibrant, green places for healthier people.

Roots in the Ravines

CONNECTING NEIGHBOURHOODS TO NATURE THROUGH TORONTO'S RAVINE SYSTEM

Toronto's intricate ravine system is one of the largest in the world, and among the city's most cherished greenspaces. Evergreen's connection to the ravines runs deep, from tree planting in the Don Valley in our early days as an organization, to our ongoing collaboration on the Loop Trail project. In 2023, Evergreen hosted 11 ravine activations across the city. Activities ranged from community walks in Thorncliffe Park, Warden Woods Ravine, and G Ross Lord Park to bike rides in South Parkdale, Black Creek, Regent Park and Evergreen Brick Works. Partnership and collaboration were key to the success of these activations. Evergreen worked closely with the City of Toronto, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Park People and many other community-based groups and local leaders to engage over 430 individuals. Building on the love that Toronto residents have for the ravines, we worked together with partners to ensure that the ravines remain robust, accessible and blooming with activity for years to come.



"I attended the Good Mourning Festival at Evergreen Brick Works, an event that centres grief and celebration in public space. I walked around the trails, got delicious food from the vendors, and enjoyed exploring the festival activations. I was struck by an installation about loss and grief where poems were hanging from tree branches. It was amazing to see people — including children — taking pieces of poetry from the trees and putting them back to share with others.

This festival is funded by the City of Toronto's Cultural Festival Funding Program. I'm proud to see our city supporting work that brings people together in public space for moments of deep connection."

— City of Toronto Mayor, Olivia Chow

Good Mourning Festival

This year, Evergreen hosted our first ever Good Mourning Festival, a two-day, culturally rich event, that saw over 10,000 community members celebrate and reclaim death as a special part of life. Visitors were invited to explore the topics of grief and mourning through a wide variety of workshops, food, art installations, reflective walks and more. A group of artists, including Philitimo Life, Space for Grief, Mexican Folk Ballet, Creato and Mammalian Diving Reflex, helped create space through stunning visual, musical and dance offerings. Visitors explored a variety of interactive installations where they wove thoughts into a living tapestry, took leaves (poems) from trees that resonated with them, participated in one-on-one walking performances, engaged with digital storytelling installations and moved their feet to the music and dance in the main pavilions.



Strawberry Heart Lodge at EBW

ACCESSIBLE CEREMONY SPACE IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

We are excited to share that during the Good Mourning Festival the ***Ode'imniwiigamig*** or Strawberry Heart Lodge was constructed on the west site of Evergreen Brick Works. This ceremonial Wiigwaam was built by Dr. Hopi Martin in collaboration with the City of Toronto, with the help of Indigenous community members and many Evergreen staff. The first few months of operation have been monumental for the community. Not only are there weekly ceremonies taking place, but the Heart Lodge is the only Wiigwaam in the city that is on the subway line, making it much more accessible to urban Indigenous individuals.



Investing in vibrant cities across Canada

Photo courtesy of Marc Crabtree

Evergreen is taking what we've learned through decades of placemaking in Toronto and expanded that impact across the country. Through the innovative work of our national programs, Evergreen is investing in a healthier and stronger future.

Evergreen Conference

MAKING THE CASE FOR PLACE

Alongside our partners, we relaunched the Evergreen Conference in 2023. This national conference brought industries, cultures and regions together to examine the potential of public space to address social, ecological and economic challenges. This year, we hosted:

- 39 speakers;
- 30 represented organizations;
- 14 unique sessions;
- 406 in person + 364 online participants.

From Zita Cobb's keynote speech on placemaking to sessions on Climate Ready Schools, to transformative action for cities of the future, to Indigenous led programming events onsite, the day was a bustling success.



Photo courtesy of John McQuarrie

AI For the Resilient City

A DATA VISUALIZATION TOOL EMPOWERING CITIES TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION

2023 was a big year, as three major Canadian cities used our tool to help build and inform their climate mitigation planning.

- The City of Calgary used the tool to inform planning policies around climate adaptation and community planning.
- The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) integrated the tool into their sustainable neighbourhood action plan.
- The tool was used by three departments within Peel Region to support the municipality on five different projects and planning initiatives.

We also had the opportunity to feature our technology at the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona, Spain and Pritzker Forum on Global Cities in Chicago, USA.



A National Impact

MOBILIZING COMMUNITY BUILDERS FOR GREATER RESILIENCY

In 2023, Evergreen helped build municipal and community capacity across the country through events, resource-sharing and skill-building programs. This included:

- Sharing a wealth of knowledge on the Evergreen Resource Hub — a free online source for reports, case studies and practical toolkits, including several new toolkits and assessments for climate risk and resilience and four new research briefs.
- Over 20 skill-building workshops and webinars to create networking opportunities, build community capacity and share best practices on a range of subjects from local fundraising and solution-design to climate resilience planning.
- 1-on-1 consultation in support of 58 innovative housing solutions across Canada.
- 5 podcast episodes of Future Fix/ Face au Futur, co-produced with our media partner, Spacing.



(Re)connecting children to nature

Photo courtesy of Daniel Wangi

Nature is vital to our health and wellbeing. In 2023, we introduced two new programs to help kids better understand the effects of climate change and to deepen their connections to the natural world.

Optimizing climate education

In 2023, our Visiting Schools Program launched new content aimed at teaching young people how to approach the climate crisis with action-oriented solutions and to overcome their eco-anxieties.

Students learned about resilient landscapes, green technologies and local climate action strategies. This new content reached 900+ students from 19 different schools across Ontario, delivering programming in both English and French. 100% of surveyed educators said the program equipped them with new ideas and insights for teaching climate resilience.

In our 2022 Annual Report, we shared how we launched our first Climate Ready School pilot at Irma Coulson Public School in Milton. A year later, we went back to hear from the kids who have been enjoying it. Please visit www.evergreen.ca/irmacoulson to learn more about this project and find the video.



“We cannot stop climate change from happening. We must learn how to adapt, and quickly. This program begins the process of teaching adaptation. It may be the most important workshop that secondary students ever take.”

— Participating Educator

“The Evergreen kitchen was filled with laughter, and the sound of the big drum echoed through the valley. The power of food and community was reflected in the many hands that created the meal of smoked moose stew, sweet water Bannock, and strawberry drink. Feeding the community and feasting with the drums while surrounded by nature allows all our relations to be a part of the celebration in a good way.”

— Wandering Spirit School Teacher

Drum Feasts

In partnership with Kapapamahchakwew - Wandering Spirit School, Evergreen helped facilitate several Drum Feast events in 2023. These celebrations gave students the opportunity to enjoy land-based programs in the heart of Toronto’s ravine system while learning about Indigenous cultural traditions. Events and ceremonies were co-developed by staff and Elders from Wandering Spirit School in collaboration with Evergreen’s land stewards and experienced outdoor educators. Through educational activities, a ceremonial meal and the traditional practices of drumming and storytelling, students were able to celebrate alongside teachers and Elders in a truly unique setting.





Great public places need great people

At Evergreen, we're dedicated to creating public places that serve the community. We can't do this alone. Working alongside communities and volunteers helps ensure that every place is meeting real needs and striving towards equity.

Right relations with Indigenous communities

As a land steward, Evergreen believes deeply in our responsibility in creating access to, caring for and centering land in decision making. Working from the advice and past recommendations of Indigenous community leaders and partners, Evergreen's focus in 2023 was on laying the foundations for more intentional reconciliation. We worked internally to assess the state of Evergreen's existing relationships with Indigenous peoples and identify barriers and challenges to righting those relations. In 2024, we will continue this work, aiming to translate all recommendations and results into an Evergreen Reconciliation Action Plan.

Further, in response to recommendations from the community, we launched a city-wide consultation process to learn directly from Indigenous communities as to how we can better welcome and support folks at the Evergreen Brick Works site. This process will directly shape exciting plans in the works for a new Ravine Centre and hub for Indigenous programming on site, in what's known as Building 1.



“Space is such an expensive and difficult thing to come by as a small, independent organization, and the work that Evergreen is doing is so important. Thank you, thank you!”

— Justine Yu, Living Hyphen

“Garden Circle is such wonderful evidence of how volunteers embrace the Brick Works as their own backyard. So many volunteers came out to help us over the course of the season, braving rain, heat, and cold in order to support our greenspaces. From trash pickups to invasive plant removal to planting, we could not steward this site without the support of our amazing volunteer community.”

— Evergreen Brick Works Staff Member



Community Spotlight Series: Bringing ideas to life

In 2023, the new Community Spotlight Series supported 23 different partners with over 30 different programs and activities on site at Evergreen Brick Works. Thanks to the support of our partners, we were able to provide artists with a platform for their work while simultaneously animating our site with a wider range of community-centred programs and activities with fewer barriers to attend.

The Community Spotlight Series helped grow our community. Visitors participated in programs and events including: a variety of theatrical and musical performances; story telling events; sound baths; bolly yoga; sustainable and nature-based art programs; community mural and art projects; film screenings; and an intergenerational dance party.

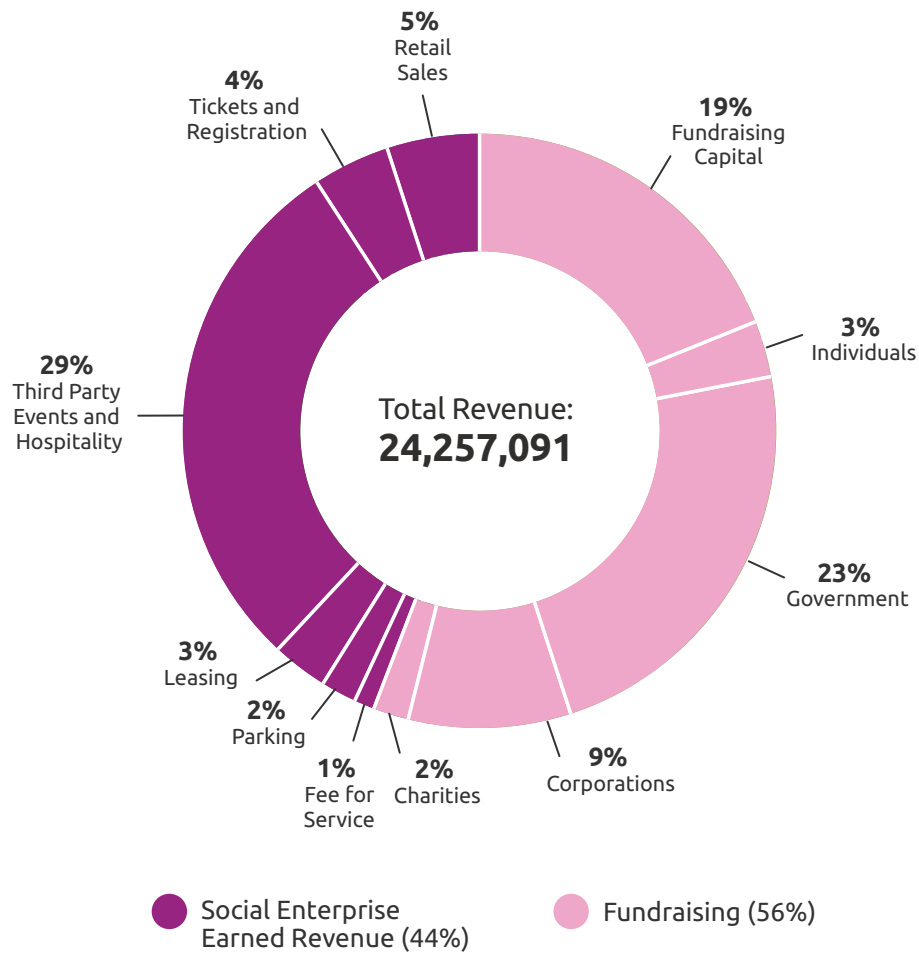
Volunteer spotlight

We couldn't do what we do without our amazing volunteers. Your role is integral to making our purpose and promise possible. In 2023, we were able to run five new programs and events (like Noodle Fest, Tomato Festivities at the Farmers Market and the Good Mourning Festival) thanks to the added capacity offered by our volunteers. Volunteers helped plant 50+ native species on site, guided 84 public tours and welcomed 12,000+ visitors to the Children's Garden.

To learn more on how to volunteer with Evergreen, visit www.evergreen.ca/take-action/volunteer/

Financials and community of supporters

REVENUE



EXPENSES

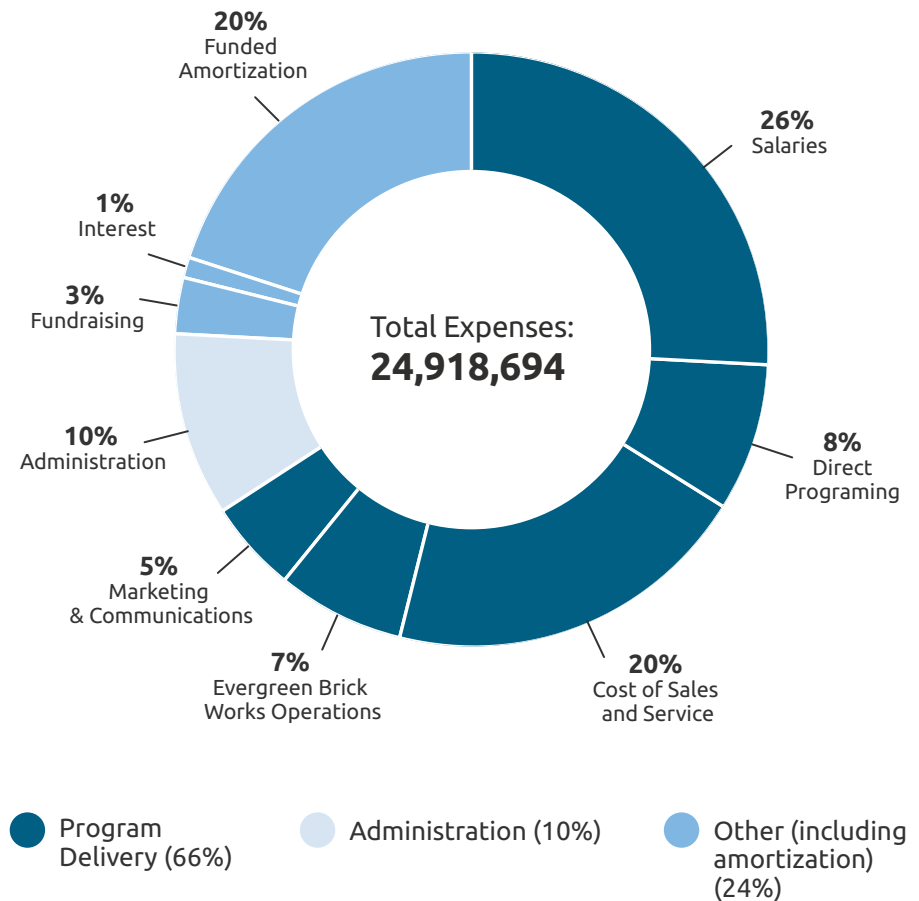




Photo courtesy of Stanley Shoolman

Our community of supporters

THANK YOU FOR A YEAR OF BUILDING CONNECTIONS TO NATURE AND EACH OTHER THROUGH BETTER PUBLIC SPACES.

Now more than ever, people are disconnected from each other, their communities and nature. This year, we refined our focus to the importance of public places, like Evergreen Brick Works, to connect us to what matters most. Public spaces shape the way we live and help our communities thrive. They encourage us to take a moment and connect to the world around us through conversation, art, food and exploration.

Thanks to the help of our funders, volunteers, and partners, we have been able to continue the momentum needed to prioritize our public spaces to create cities bursting with life!

With your generous support, we can continue to transform public spaces for the health of people and the planet, ensuring a healthier future for all.

Board of Directors

THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED GROUP OF CHIEF VOLUNTEER OFFICERS — OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

We are excited to announce the arrival of five new board members, Robert Lawrie, Chris Crowell, Steve Mennill, Akif Unal and Cindy Bush. We are also grateful for the years of service given by board members Helen Burstyn, Jamison Steeve, Renee Gomes and Abhijeet Rege, all of whose terms ended in 2023.

Helen Burstyn*

Former Board Chair

Andy Chisholm

Board Chair

Andrea DelZotto

Vice Chair and Chair of the Program and Capital Development Committee

Upton Jeans

Treasurer and Chair, Finance & Audit Committee

Jamison Steeve*

Former Secretary and Chair, Program & Capital Development Committee

Tom Milroy

Renée Gomes

Former Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee

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Shabin Mohamed

Robert Lawrie

Chris Crowell

Steve Mennill

Akif Unal

Cindy Bush

*Denotes Director whose term ended in December 2023.

Our donors and supporters

Evergreen's work locally and nationally is generously supported by public and private donors and our volunteers. We are proud to acknowledge the following individuals, organizations, foundations and partners who contributed from January 1 to December 31, 2023.

Abby Litchfield

Abhijeet Rege

Adele Goldberg

Airlie Foundation 

Akif Unal

Alec Ware 

Alexandra Service

Alicia Thurston Photography

Alisa Posesorski 

Alison Addeman

Alyssa & Jonathan Ages

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 Thanks for being a donor for 10+ years.

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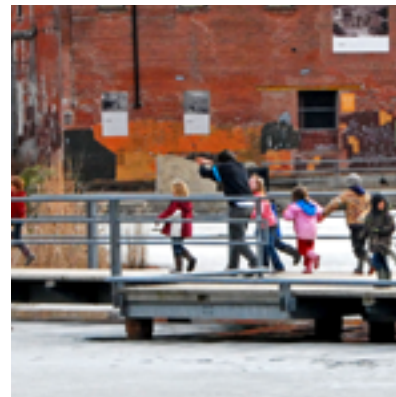



















Photo courtesy of Mike Derblich















Photo courtesy of Thomas Chung

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Evergreen Brick Works
550 Bayview Avenue, Suite 300
Toronto, ON M4W 3X8

info@evergreen.ca
Tel: 416.596.1495
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