



CITIZENS' GREENER EVANSTON

2020 Annual Report

Center cover photo *Angled Sunrise*
by Ted Glasoe





President's Letter

May 15, 2021

Dear Friends of Citizens' Greener Evanston:



What a year it has been! Somehow, despite or maybe even because of the constraints caused by the pandemic, CGE and its programs have accomplished a great deal in the last year. As the climate crisis is finally garnering the attention it deserves on the national level, here in Evanston we at CGE know that we cannot rest. We continue to work hard for the swift and full implementation of the Evanston Climate Action and Resilience Plan, with a focus on environmental justice.

The environmental movement is coming to understand the critical intersection between racism and environmental degradation. At CGE we are striving to listen and learn, and to engage in issues that intersect with climate change, such as water equity, food apartheid, and housing insecurity.

Our biggest news this year is that we hired our first Executive Director, Joey Feinstein, and we are thrilled at the wealth of talent, experience, and passion he brings to the organization! Joey joins us in the midst of our strategic planning process, which is proving incredibly valuable to mapping out our long-term priorities.

We won a generous matching grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the funds were fully matched in a matter of months! This grant is going towards the restoration of habitat in Harbert Park and Ladd Arboretum. It includes funding for paid internships to promote youth engagement and career development.

We have also continued to cultivate relationships with a variety of community organizations. We have secured the donation of \$4,950.00 to Evanston Community Foundation's Rapid Response Fund through a special community solar promotion with Trajectory Energy. We were sponsors of Evanston's first ever Juneteenth Parade. All this in addition to our continued engagement with the City's office of Sustainability and the CARP Implementation Task Force of the Evanston Environment Board.

I'm pleased to say that we doubled the number of youth seats on the board from two to four, and these youth members have been doing great things, as you will see below. This should give us all hope for the future.

Finally, we had the great fortune of securing a Fellow from Kellogg School of Business, Haerim Hong, who researched and crafted recommendations for a membership model. This effort will help provide a sustainable revenue stream to support our work and increase our impact at City Hall. Watch for the rollout and join CGE later this year!

Rachel Rosner

President

Programs and Accomplishments

Reconstituting the Energy Task Force

Late in 2020 the Energy Task Force revitalized itself, bringing on new members and holding meetings around several agreed-upon focus areas:

- Legislative/ regulatory: CGE committee members worked with Sierra Club to support the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) in Illinois, and they drafted a resolution for the City Council to endorse the legislation.
- Solar energy: the group has been in ongoing development of an electronic “flyer” for solar options in Evanston for public outreach. Related to that, they began tracking the quantity of Evanston rooftop solar installations.
- Building electrification: They began information gathering for development of beneficial building electrification guidelines for public outreach and began coordinating efforts with the Evanston Development Cooperative.

The group has also been engaged in tracking City activities related to energy procurement, mitigation strategies, and energy code updates for City facilities and the Evanston community. In addition, they are focused on collecting data to help track CARP implementation.

Given the number of energy-related public inquiries received via the CGE website, an energy “help desk” may be in the works.

Youth Board Members Make An Impact

CGE has had student board members since 2018, and the four ETHS students on the board in 2020 represent our largest number yet. We’ve been delighted to provide them with the important tools and leadership skills they’ll need to further the fight the climate crisis. In 2020 CGE supported their efforts to push for more rigorous climate policy in Evanston as they organized a number of strikes, chalk-outs (with 200+ in attendance), and other public acts. The four board members continued to be an integral part of the ETHS sustainability committee, a collective of students, teachers, and adults in the community, with CGE members playing an advisory role, that was formed to push the administration on environmental issues and help the school play a role in helping Evanston reach its climate goals.



Watershed Collective: Connecting Residents Around Our Greatest Resource

Watershed Collective continued its outreach, education, and advocacy in the Evanston community. Projects during 2020 included:

- Launching an adult education program about the Great Lakes.
- A project to involve community members in monitoring public rain gardens throughout the City and helped City staff review and plan for improved maintenance.
- Tracking City infrastructure projects for opportunities to ensure the City considers green infrastructure options in the design scope of work. This involved developing an inventory of City green infrastructure projects, which included a description of each project, photographs, and a map. The projects were grouped by the following categories: alleys, parking lots, parking lanes, plazas/ sidewalks and rain gardens. Each description included an assessment of the project's condition and performance. They have been working with the Public Works Agency to gauge condition and maintenance.



Rain garden monitoring
at James Park

- In an effort to understand the water concerns and connections of Evanston residents, the team partnered with Northwestern University on the *We are Water* project. This involved launching a citywide survey followed by interviews with a broad sector of the community; outcomes will include working toward an open (token-free) beach policy and greater access to public water education. The *We are Water* project aims to align with CARP's water goals. Project members are now starting interviews to follow up with broad sectors of the community.
- With the Energy group (see above) they have also been contributing to tracking CARP implementation.
- Supported School District 65 climate action projects by connecting water experts with students.

Environmental Justice Evanston (EJE)

The Environmental Justice Evanston Committee achieved several noteworthy successes in 2020. The most monumental of these was having the City unanimously pass the Environmental Justice resolution in September. To achieve this, EJE worked closely and diligently with City staff, aldermen, the Environment Board, the Equity & Empowerment Commission, and residents to ensure broad support. Following passage of the resolution, the EJE committee began developing a comprehensive EJ ordinance and an environmental geographic mapping tool that are both deemed critical to achieving environmental justice in Evanston. In November, EJE drafted an initial version of an Environmental Justice Playbook, a step-by-step guide to help Evanstonians address existing EJ issues they are seeking to resolve. The Playbook now is being updated based on public feedback with the intention to distribute it to a wider audience.

The group also brought attention to environmental justice in the local media with two articles in the Evanston RoundTable: “Black Lives and Environmental Justice in Evanston” and a guest essay, “Final Air Quality Study Only a Beginning.” The latter article focused on the findings of an Air Quality Study that were presented to the public this past year, which focused on the neighborhood surrounding the Waste Transfer Station on Church St. EJE had played a supportive role in financing and implementing this study over the past several years, and the findings highlighted the presence of specific air pollutants and noise around the transfer station. EJE was hoping for more definitive findings, but based on the study results and nearby resident frustrations with the station’s adverse environmental impacts, the city is requesting additional monitoring help from the U.S. and Illinois E.P.A.

EJE also sought to help CGE more effectively embrace the tenets and practices of racial equity by creating and delivering a document to CGE leadership that detailed specific ways CGE could work to achieve these goals.

Finally, three new members joined the group in 2020: Andrew Schlickman, Robyn McMurray Hurtig, and Maddy McNear. These three have significantly strengthened the committee’s capabilities in the areas of ordinance writing, communications, and social media.

Edible Evanston: Growing Gardens, Growing Gardeners

Edible Evanston continued to provide opportunities for individuals to expand their knowledge of nutrition, food-growing, and composting, and helped them to experience the benefits of locally raised produce, even during a pandemic year.

Educational Workshops, and “Work and Learn” Days

A highly successful annual Seed Swap was held in conjunction with the Evanston Community Gardener lottery in March 2020, just before pandemic closedown. The Seed Swap handed out nearly 1,000 packets of free seeds to attendees. The Seed Swap was held in conjunction with an educational workshop on “Planning for Maximum Yield – What to Sow When.” Outdoor “Work and Learn” activities continued occasionally at the Food Forest in conjunction with volunteer workdays. Several Zoom workshops were conducted in collaboration with the Evanston Public Library during the latter part of the year.



Seed Swap before
the pandemic shutdown



Gardeners stepped up
their produce donations

Produce-Sharing initiatives

Volunteers worked even harder during the pandemic year to help individual local growers get their excess produce to the many people in need. Since 2012 Edible Evanston has delivered thousands of pounds of fresh local vegetables and herbs to Evanston food pantries each year. Pick-ups in 2020 were weekly from June through October from five community gardens and local residential growers. Drop-off locations included McCormick, Twiggs, James Park, Elks Park and the Ridgeville Park District. Nearly 1,300 pounds of vegetables and herbs were delivered to a local food pantry in pandemic 2020.

Eggleston Anniversary Food Forest

The Eggleston Park Food Forest and Orchard is a diverse planting of perennial edible trees, shrubs, and small plants – including fruits, vegetables, nuts, “mushroom-logs” and herbs – designed to mimic the natural balance of a forest by utilizing permaculture principles. The multi layered Food Forest is a demonstration of how residents can grow their own healthy food, as well as supporting Evanston’s Climate Action Resiliency Plan (CARP) by showing how the community can become more food resilient.

Monthly Saturday volunteer workdays continued in 2020 with volunteers observing masking and social distancing. Additional workdays were added for some Tuesday and Thursday evenings.



Volunteers, meeting pandemic protocols, still came out to support the Food Forest

Four new raised beds were added in the “annuals” vegetable growing area near where the Eagle Boy Scouts added two new entrance Pergolas in 2019. Unfortunately, the family-oriented Annual Fall Festival and May Bee Fest were cancelled in 2020. However, tours and workshops were still given for school groups throughout the summer.

Transportation (Go Evanston)

During 2020 Go Evanston joined forces with CGE's long-standing Transportation Task Force to promote a stronger and cohesive climate-friendly mobility movement. The group also contributed to events hosted by *Wise Up*, Mayor-elect Daniel Biss, and CGE's own Earth Day series. Finally, they continue to facilitate public engagement efforts for the City's upcoming street projects on Church Street, Oakton Street, and Chicago Avenue.

Natural Habitat Evanston (NHE)

The Natural Habitat program continued to make an impact across the community in our schools, parks, and private yards. Successful projects included:

- Launching the Pollinator Pledge for eco-friendly gardens in January 2020, in which roughly 80 signs were distributed. The Pledge encourages leaving leaves and plant stalks, planting native plants, no pesticides in yards, mowing less, less wasted lighting. The pledge is a different kind of petition to demonstrate to yard companies and the city that Evanstonians will garden to preserve insects and birds.
- Oakton and Orrington elementary schools enhanced their pollinator gardens, due to a Highland Garden Club grant. Oakton received 28 plants to build out a new

pollinator sun garden, and Orrington received 14 plants to enhance the wildflowers around its school sign. Parents and volunteers maintain the gardens.

- Helped create a small pollinator garden near the Hinman-Main rain garden.
- Planted 12 trees at King Arts School with more than 30 volunteers in two planting events for May Day and Oaktober. Thanks to Highland Garden Club for its grant of support! The King Arts families were very enthusiastic planting the many oaks, cherry, and sycamore. It was the beginning of transforming the grounds at King Arts, which serves a high number of students from disadvantaged Evanston neighborhoods.
- Established the Fund for Evanston Trees to help grow Evanston's tree canopy, and to encourage the city to treat its elm trees for Dutch Elm Disease.
- Tracked events at Isabella Woods and Lovelace Meadow to advocate and preserve them as natural areas. Successfully defended Kendall College old oaks at the developer's 2020 appeal to city council.
- At Lovelace Park started a new pollinator garden on its north side, thanks also to a Highland Garden Club grant. About a dozen volunteers turned up to spread mulch and plant 38 wildflowers. Park neighbors maintain the garden.
- At Harbert-Payne Woods, a large park on the east side of the North Shore Channel from Main to Dempster, they added 76 semi-shade and sun-loving plants, thanks to a grant from Highland Garden Club.

CGE (and NHE) successfully secured grant funding from the Illinois Clean Energy Foundation and created the Channel Habitat Fund to continue to expand the natural areas in the Ladd Arboretum and Harbert-Payne Woods.

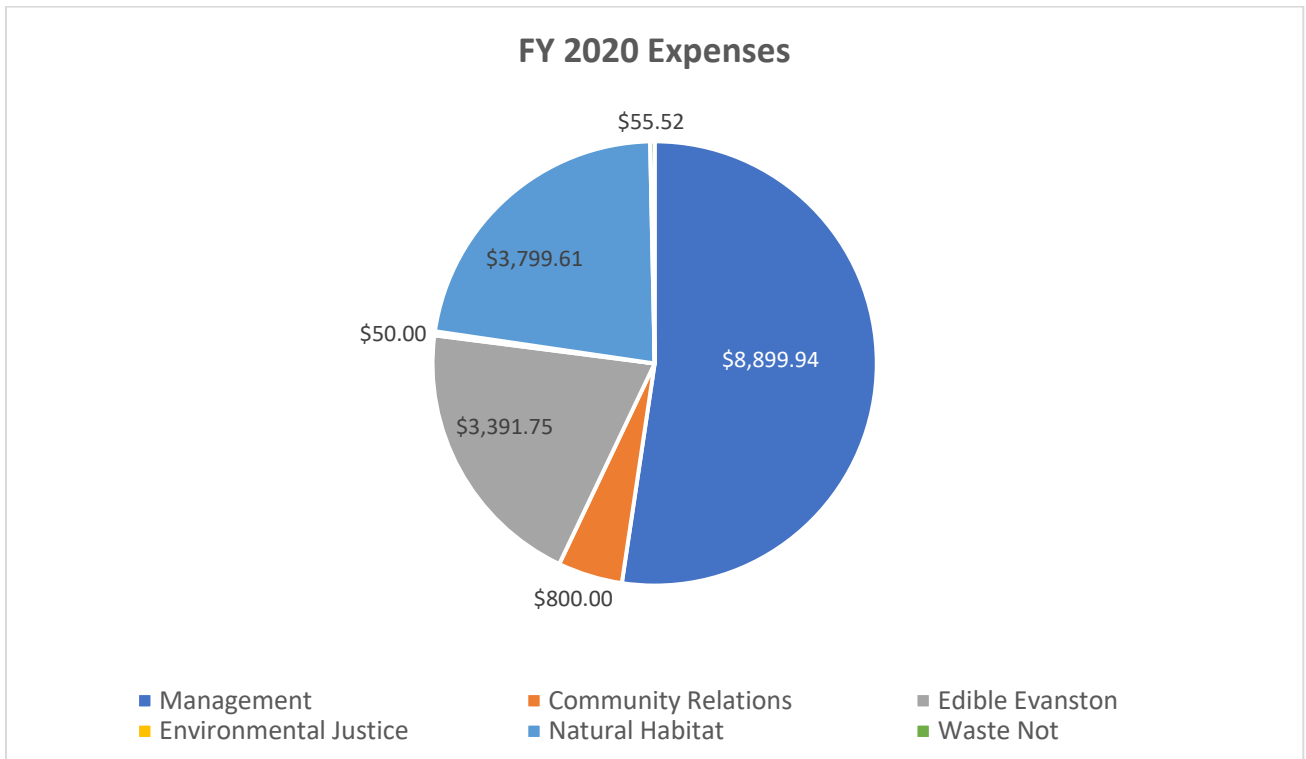
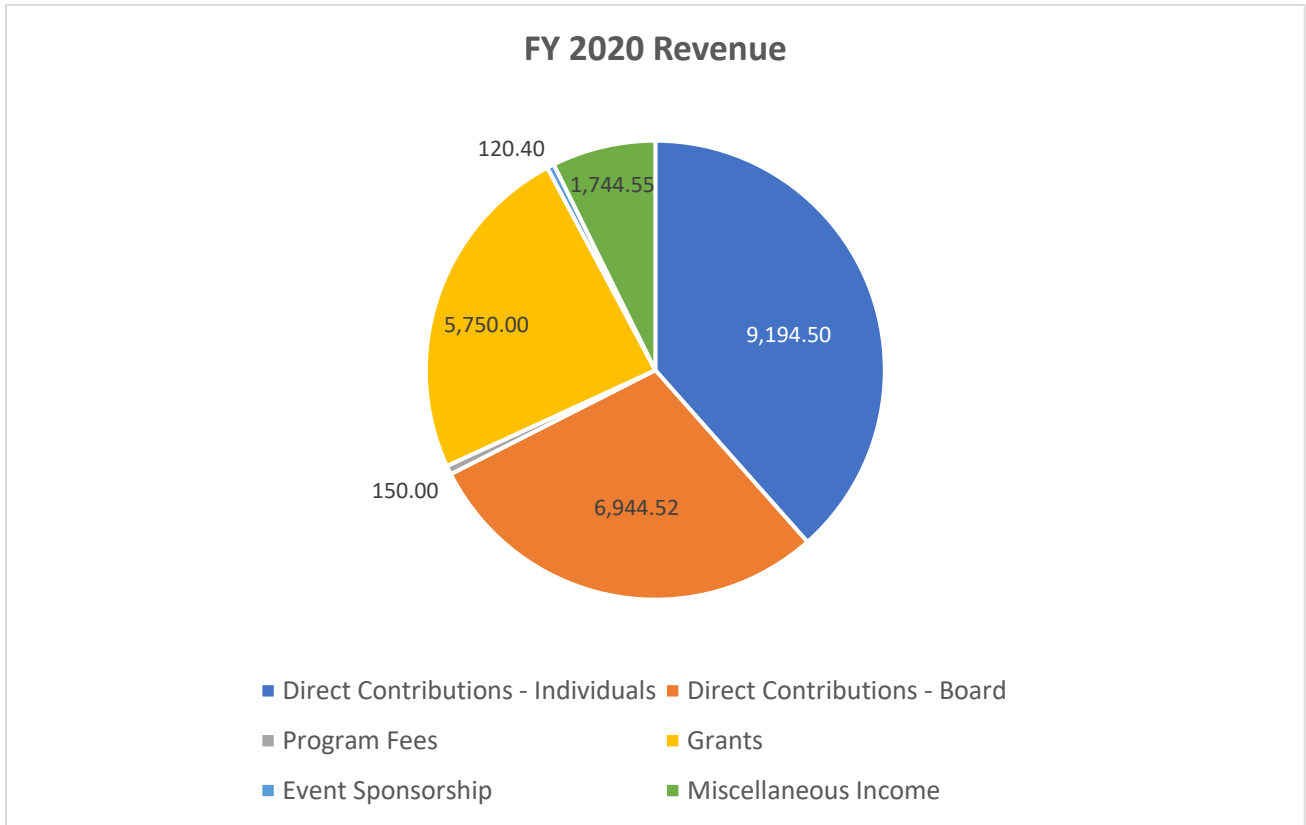


Tree planting at King Arts



Friends of Lovelace Park planting wildflowers from Natural Habitat Evanston

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