



Green Cities, Healthy Planet

Strategic Plan
2013-2017



EVERGREEN



Collaborate. Inspire. Engage.

When Evergreen began in 1991, our idea was simple... and powerful: Imagine your city with nature, and Evergreen will help you make it happen. While the complexity and reach of our work has grown, the fundamental premise remains and is just as powerful. At Evergreen we believe we can solve even the most pressing urban environmental issues by bringing people together, inspiring them with possibilities and engaging them in identifying solutions and taking action. The need has never been more urgent.

It is clear that the planet's climate is actually changing as a direct result of human activity—much of it linked to urbanization—and this fact is creating unprecedented and dangerous risks. On a global scale, the earth's air and water are increasingly contaminated, more people are living in urban poverty than ever before, and increasing patterns of urbanization are accelerating the wholesale destruction of essential natural areas and agricultural land—and with them, the loss of vital habitat and biodiversity. A century ago, fewer than 40% of Canadians and only 10% of the world's population lived in cities. Today, more than 80% of Canadians and over half the world's seven billion people live in urban centres. And the trend shows no sign of slowing.

There is some reason for hope: over the last 20 years we have begun to see a shift in attitudes, an awareness emerging that to address and solve complex environmental problems each of us—and all of us—must change our relationship with the natural world.

It will be in the world's urban centres that this challenge must be met.

Evergreen's First 20 Years: Vital Statistics

- Affected the daily educational experience of close to one million students
- Provided more than \$5.5 million in grants to over 2,100 schools and community groups
- With Evergreen's direct educational and hands-on design support, more than 3,000 schools have transformed their grounds
- Established innovative partnerships with 15 school boards across Canada
- Brought together communities in stewardship events in Canadian parks, resulting in the planting of approximately 500,000 native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses
- Engaged more than 150,000 Canadians in nearly 1,000,000 volunteer hours
- Collaborated with dozens of social service agencies, First Nations groups and youth organizations to build skills and bring nature into marginalized neighbourhoods
- Raised over \$100 million (including \$50 million to develop Evergreen Brick Works) to support the greening of our cities, leveraging sponsorship dollars with foundation, government and corporate grants, individual donations and earned revenues

WHERE WE'VE BEEN...

Since our founding as a charity in 1991, Evergreen has focused on bringing together Canadian communities and nature for the benefit of both. Our work is founded on the principle that to effect lasting, meaningful change, individuals and communities alike must be inspired and enabled to adopt new attitudes and behaviours. From our origins in community tree plantings and school ground greening, to our recent large-scale adaptive reuse of an urban heritage brownfield site, Evergreen Brick Works, to the launch of our newest initiative, Evergreen CityWorks, we have always worked to ensure that our cities are green in their fullest form—living within the limits of our natural resources, built upon social connections that respect and nurture cultural and ecological diversity, and contributing to a green economy based on innovation in concert with nature.

Evergreen is proud of the role we have played in fostering this change. Our accomplishments can be tracked in numbers (see sidebar) but our story is more than that. For 20 years, Evergreen has fostered tangible improvements to the environmental, social and economic health of our cities. We have done so one project and one relationship at a time, helping to transform concrete and asphalt public spaces into natural experiential learning opportunities. We have done so by convening communities, by demonstrating how they can green their own neighbourhoods, by enabling and inspiring teachers to put nature in the forefront of their curricula, and by raising millions of dollars in corporate, government and individual contributions and disbursing this money to worthy community-based activities.

...AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

Building on over 20 years of bringing Canadians together, and from our new base at Evergreen Brick Works, we will advance new programs and activities that expand the scope of how communities working to restore nature in cities can address a broader range of urban greening issues. And we will deliver our mission in progressive and innovative ways.

Our many projects and initiatives will be grouped into the following four program themes, because we believe positive action in these key areas will lead to green, resilient cities and a sustainable future.

- **Children and Nature**
Engaging young people to connect with the natural world
- **Urban Ecology**
Empowering Canadians to restore and conserve nature in urban landscapes
- **Healthy Choices**
Empowering Canadians to live active, healthy and green lifestyles
- **City Building**
Advancing ideas and innovation for building sustainable cities

We will act as **both convenors and as collaborators**, bringing together diverse audiences including regional, national and global innovation leaders to share ideas, build networks and accelerate innovation among businesses, governments, educators and the public.

We will utilize Evergreen Brick Works as a dynamic venue and an international stage for **showcasing and demonstrating best practices** in design, policy, local action and engagement.

We will stay close to our roots as hands-on experiential educators, and continue to **empower Canadians** to create place-based solutions to local environmental degradation.

We will continue to **demonstrate ideas in action** and empower local initiatives that will lead to larger environmental and societal change.

// Since 1991, Evergreen has fostered a culture of improving the environmental, social and economic health of our cities one project and one relationship at a time //

Our Vision, Mission and Values

VISION STATEMENT

Green Cities, Healthy Planet

MISSION STATEMENT

Inspiring action to green cities.

VALUES

Collaboration

Active, respectful collaboration is the foundation for all of our work. Convening citizens from diverse corners of the community helps build shared knowledge and a common language and vision that inspire and accelerate strategies for change.

Innovation

We seek innovative ideas and we inspire bold action. We are willing to take strategic risks to support important ideas and we evolve ideas through trial and error, creative problem-solving, action and reflection. We believe diversity feeds innovation, and we engage people in ways that are playful, optimistic and empowering.

Accountability

We are accountable to those who generously contribute to help us achieve our mission and to those we serve. We seek to deliver programs and services of the highest quality, and we are transparent in the way we allocate resources.

A Systems Approach

Finding solutions to seemingly intractable systemic environmental problems requires embedding an ecological perspective across subjects, issues, sectors, and ultimately, a worldview. We approach our work through the lens of relationships between people and place, and the recognition that environmental issues and solutions must be viewed as part of interdependent, complex systems.

Our Strategic Priorities

Over the next five years, Evergreen will build on a solid platform of community based programming and unprecedented success in a one-of-a-kind adaptive reuse project.

Evergreen is poised to play an expanded role in a suite of issues focused on natural systems and green cities—transportation, water, waste, energy, housing, food. We will leverage the relationships and experience of our core programs with Evergreen Brick Works.

The following interdependent strategic priorities will guide our work over the coming years. Together, they present a compelling strategy that will position Evergreen to make a greater contribution to our natural environment and to the greening of Canada's and the world's cities.

1. Establish Evergreen Brick Works as a centre for green cities
2. Engage, support and enable an expanding network of action to green cities
3. Ensure Evergreen is a resilient, sustainable organization

"A Green City"

Green cities are those whose design and management are inspired and informed by natural systems—air, water, soil—where all citizens have access to nature and whose economy is founded on innovation in concert with nature. Green cities are resilient cities, and thus will be best able to adapt to the disruptive social, economic and technical consequences of climate change.



1. Establish Evergreen Brick Works as a centre for green cities

An adaptive-reuse project located in the heart of Toronto's ravine system, Evergreen Brick Works' unparalleled natural, geological and industrial heritage offers the ideal context in which to showcase, demonstrate and encourage behavioural change, while convening and inspiring diverse communities to come together to create greener cities.

Evergreen Brick Works has two symbiotic functions:

1. An environmental community centre and local landmark, and as a creative and dynamic space for involving a range of visitors in a broad suite of experiential programming.
2. An important node in the growing green city movement showcasing innovation, sharing best practices and convening global thought leaders.

WE WILL:

• Support the transition to a green economy:

By testing ideas and showcasing innovations that promote and support the transition to a greener urban future. This unique "Living Lab" will feature site performance monitoring, real-time demonstrations of the site's green design features and showcase sustainability innovations online and on site. Concurrently, our youth green job employment training programs will develop skills and confidence among youth that help them gain meaningful employment in the emerging green economy.

• Foster sustainable behavioural change:

Inspire behavioural change by offering a strong suite of accessible experiential programs, for education and engagement. These include a public Expo series focused on transportation, urban ecology, sustainable food systems, green design and green employment. We will connect the importance of place-based education with global action by interpreting the ecological, industrial and geological significance of the Evergreen Brick Works' site in tandem with future trends in sustainable city building.

• Encourage innovation through social enterprise:

Through our "Leadership, Innovation and Sustainability Forums," by commissioning green economy research, and through our year-round program of provocative speakers from around the world, we will inspire innovative policy, enable partnerships and support progressive projects locally and globally. We will share our lessons learned through the planning and design of Evergreen Brick Works to support other organizations seeking to undertake complex green design development projects, and we will position Evergreen Brick Works as a showcase for innovation in social enterprise, enabling a new way of conducting business and inspiring social entrepreneurs.



Evergreen Brick Works

For more than 100 years, the Don Valley Brick Works produced bricks that defined Toronto's skyline and built landmark buildings across Canada. When Evergreen approached the City in 2002 with plans to transform the site to the highest green development standards, the historic Don Valley Brick Works was an abandoned collection of 16 industrial heritage buildings, crumbling from years of neglect. Evergreen's transformation of the Brick Works incorporated features that support water conservation, renewable energy, waste reduction and alternative transportation. The one new building on site is designed to be LEED® Platinum facility.

Evergreen Brick Works now features:

- demonstration gardens
- children's natural learning grounds and indoor classrooms
- an ecological garden centre and eco-store
- an award-winning farmers' market
- eco-pavillion space for community festivals
- large-scale exhibits focused on sustainability
- conference facilities, and
- a rich menu of arts and site interpretation

Evergreen Brick Works has been developed as a self-sustaining social enterprise, with revenues generated on site covering operating costs and contributing to the delivery of our mission-driven programming.

2. Engage, support and enable an expanding network of action to green cities

Working in collaboration with the broader community, Evergreen takes a holistic ecological approach to the reinvention, design and management of our cities. Whether it is in our children's school grounds, parks, residential landscapes, corporate and institutional properties, or broader public infrastructure, natural systems must inform the design of our green spaces, buildings, transportation, energy, waste and water systems.

Historically, our work has focused on delivering programs that inspire, educate and support local action to transform school grounds and green communities. Building on this platform, our approach will expand to mobilize the power of networks and social media to influence change.

WE WILL:

- **Support and strengthen the green cities network:**

Bringing together the individuals and organizations at the forefront of a green economy, and leading the way toward a sustainable future. Through the network, we will facilitate connection among all elements of Evergreen's programs at Evergreen Brick Works and across Canada with the objectives of strengthening our educational programming, deepening collaborations and expanding the range of landscapes that we work on.

- **Deliver innovative community-based programming:**

Supporting schools and community organizations working on the ground to effect change by providing local level design support, aquatic and landscape-based grants and expanding the scope to include broader sustainability issues (e.g., active transportation, energy alternatives). We will lead and support community-based tree planting and community gardening initiatives that improve air and water quality; transform barren landscapes into dynamic spaces; and work with our corporate partners to influence adoption of greener practices, such as greening corporate landscapes and increased employee engagement.

- **Build strategic partnerships that support**

accessible and inclusive programs: Evergreen fosters civic engagement that reflects the cultural diversity of Canadians, that removes barriers to civic engagement and that bridges partnerships among traditional and non-traditional allies. To ensure our work is accessible, and physically, economically and culturally relevant, we will continue to build partnerships with organizations that support targeted populations, such as First Nations and new Canadians, affordable housing providers, community health centres, social-service agencies and youth-support organizations, while increasing their involvement in the planning and delivery of new programs and services.

- **Improve community and individual health:**

Even small amounts of nature in our lives improves health and wellness, reducing stress and strengthening community ties. We will address growing rates of inactivity by delivering programs that promote physical activity such as gardening, tree planting, walking and cycling. We will address the increasing challenges of growing rates of obesity, particularly among children, through programs focused on food growing, preparing local, sustainably grown and harvested foods, farmers' markets and large-scale food events.

- **Inspire action:** Providing Canadians with information that is inspiring and compelling and that builds knowledge that leads to action. We will use a variety of media—print, electronic, social, web-based—and ensure the translation of our work into both official languages, as well as languages that represent our cultural diversity, to broaden our reach and engagement of Canadians.

All Together Now

Since 1991, Evergreen has been working to build and enhance the connections between people and nature, empowering Canadians to take a hands-on approach to their neighbourhoods. Envisioning a sustainable society where individuals live in harmony with their local environment, Evergreen has engaged communities, schools and groups across Canada, creating partnerships and resources that help to restore nature. By offering expert assistance, funding and grants, our Native Plant Database, teacher guides and lesson plans, Evergreen has enabled and inspired a generation of urban nature lovers.

Motivated by the idea that the health of Canada's cities depends on our ability to sustain green spaces, we have worked through our network of regional offices and associates to create and protect green space in Canada's urban centres. Together, we have turned vacant lots into community gardens, naturalized open spaces, created habitat, protected urban greenbelts and made our cities healthier places to live.



3. Ensure Evergreen is a resilient, sustainable organization

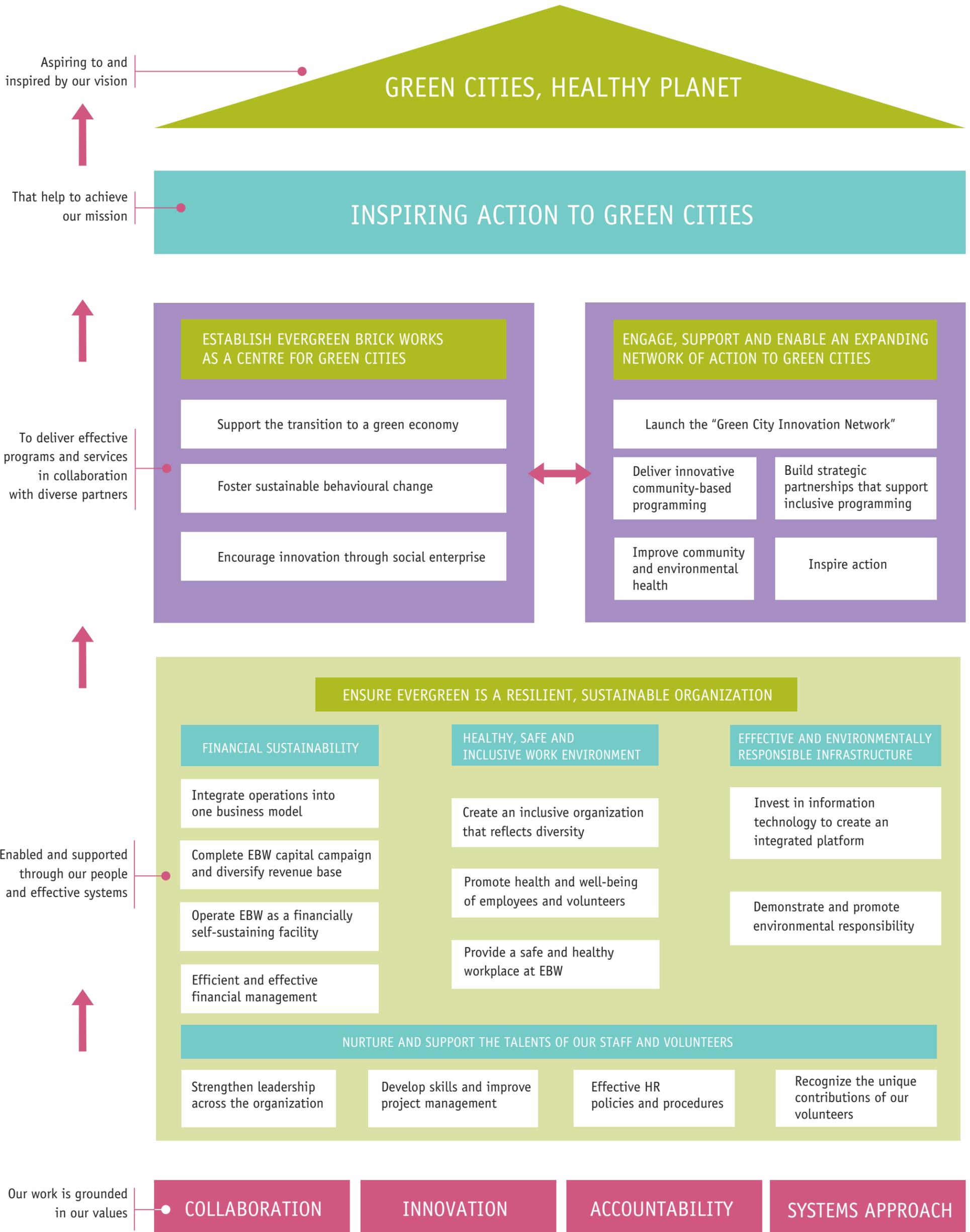
The last several years for Evergreen have seen tremendous organizational growth with the introduction of a large-scale social enterprise, and new programs and services. To continue to grow and strengthen our ability to green Canadian cities, we will support the talents of our staff and volunteers, develop operating and business plans that integrate our social enterprises with our core fundraising activities and we will make strategic investments in our operations.

WE WILL:

- **Ensure financial sustainability:** With the opening of Evergreen Brick Works, we must integrate and refine our operations into one robust business model that reflects multiple programs, businesses, and operating units working efficiently as one organization. We must complete the Evergreen Brick Works capital campaign, build our fundraising capacity and ensure that Evergreen Brick Works operates as a financially self-sustaining social enterprise that supports our mission-driven programs. We will spend responsibly and identify efficiencies that improve our financial bottom line.
- **Nurture and support the talent of our staff and volunteers:** Staff that are engaged, motivated and feel valued are a vital part of Evergreen's culture and success. We will continue to create an open organizational culture that encourages ideas, problem solving and debate and that supports positive and respectful relationships. We will strengthen existing leadership capabilities and build future organizational leaders, enhance the skills of our managers, provide professional development opportunities and provide clear and effective HR policies and procedures. We will also maintain an open culture of listening to and learning from our volunteers. Through effective recruitment, training and recognition opportunities, we will recognize and value the unique contributions that volunteers make across the organization.
- **Promote a healthy, safe and inclusive work environment:** We will create an inclusive organization that uses innovative approaches to recruit and retain staff, Board and volunteers that reflect the diverse communities we serve. We recognize that diversity of our internal and external community will provide insights that inform our work and will make us a stronger organization. We will develop policies, procedures and programs that promote the health and well-being of our employees and volunteers, and we are committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace, and operating Evergreen Brick Works to the highest standards of public safety.
- **Build effective and environmentally sound infrastructure:** We will invest in our information technology systems to create an integrated platform that supports multiple business units, improves operational efficiencies and enhances communication. Evergreen will demonstrate and promote environmental responsibility through all aspects of our operations, from internal office infrastructure, to our transportation strategies and the ongoing maintenance of Evergreen Brick Works as a green campus.

EVERGREEN'S STRATEGY MAP

Evergreen's strategy map illustrates the relationships between our strategic priorities and objectives, which collectively help us achieve our mission and vision.





EVERGREEN

Imagine your city with nature

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