



Rethinking, Recovering, and Rebuilding Together

Evergreen Canada | 2020 Annual Report



Geoff Cape
CEO and Founder,
Evergreen

Creativity. Courage. Commitment.

As I reflect on this past year and its many challenges, I am filled with gratitude, pride, and hope. Our partners, supporters, and staff stepped up with creativity and innovation, joining together to facilitate positive change in your communities. This was a true testament to the strength and commitment of our Evergreen community and the years of on-the-ground experience our team brings to their roles.

Let me highlight two examples. A dynamic partnership with our supporters helped reshape the annual Future Cities Canada Summit from a three-day in-person event to six weeks of sophisticated, dynamic, virtual programming for over 3,000 national and international urban leaders in 39 countries – moving seamlessly from high-touch to high-tech. We also reimagined our Farmers Market from an in-person experience to a safe and healthy “Farm in a Box” for curbside pick-up. As you read through the many more examples in this Annual Report, I hope you are encouraged by the changes you made possible even during these challenging times.

Our strategic pillars – advancing Evergreen Brick Works as a community hub, revitalizing public spaces across Canada, and convening national networks to transform cities – held us in good stead, enabling us to move forward with confidence and resilience during 2020. We responded with a solid platform of digital programs and activities created to serve you that has positioned Evergreen well for the next step. As we continue to evolve and grow, our strategic work is not over. I believe the mark of a successful organization will be its ability to take advantage of this new digital environment. With physical borders gone, we have an opportunity to scale our impact and collaborate more globally.

It’s a rich time for innovation. People are open to reimagining the future in new ways, and that is where Evergreen excels. Provoking new thinking, turning new ideas into sustainable action, and forging new connections – that is what makes us exceptional.

Thank you for propelling Evergreen’s work of building cities that are livable, green, and prosperous forward with your generosity and care. As we look ahead, there is still so much to do. But with you beside us, I know we can move boldly to create a future that we can be proud of, together.





Helen Burstyn

Board Chair,
Evergreen

As the Chair of the Evergreen Board of Directors, I've watched the organization flourish over the years. It has grown and changed, for the better.

We are grateful to our donors and volunteers for generously supporting the organization with their resources and their time. And we are grateful to our government, foundations and corporate partners for working with us to develop and deliver innovative programming that benefits cities, communities and families.

Last year, we were all tested as never before. Evergreen felt the effects of a global pandemic that challenged every organization, but we stayed the course and continued to provide accessible programs in innovative ways. The staff at Evergreen were able to adapt quickly and effectively, and it is their resilience that allowed the organization to continue serving the community with vital programming.

Thank you to our many steadfast supporters and champions. As you read our 2020 Annual Report, you will see that Evergreen met the challenges of 2020 head on, and I think you will agree with me that there is reason for optimism as we move forward in 2021, and beyond. I sincerely hope that you will continue to journey with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Burstyn'. The signature is fluid and cursive.





2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

Whether as a donor, visitor, participant or volunteer, your support was the foundation of Evergreen’s success as we reimagined our programming during a very challenging year:



10 years since a historic brick factory in Toronto’s Don Valley officially opened to the public as Evergreen Brick Works.



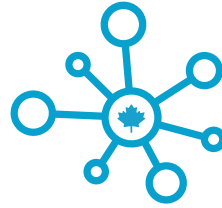
13 Art installations, exhibits & performances, such as the virtual Expansive Dances solo performances in partnership with The National Ballet of Canada and the Rita Letendre mural project at Evergreen Brick Works, provided vital creative expressions to our COVID-weary community.



22 Podcasts and webinars connected people to Evergreen initiatives, such as the Civic Commons Lab and ravine programming.



34 Indigenous partnerships were developed through initiatives like the Indigenous Reimagining of Cities and the Future Cities Canada Infrastructure Lab.



400 Communities of all sizes across Canada were supported by Evergreen through the Community Solutions Network – a program of Future Cities Canada – that enables municipal and community leaders to navigate the smart cities landscape.



1,824 Children and youth were inspired to be city builders of tomorrow through virtual programs like Virtually Outdoors and Future City Builders, and Evergreen Brick Works based camps and nature clubs



3,331 Municipal and community leaders, urban innovators and residents from **39** countries came together at Future Cities Canada: #UnexpectedSolutions



68,000 People enjoyed healthy, local food through Evergreen's Farmers Market, the Farm in a Box program, and the Healthy Food for All initiative.



CHALLENGE 1

STORIES OF IMPACT

Innovative thinking brings the market to the community during pandemic

Following an inevitable pause to the long-running Evergreen Brick Works Farmers Market, we developed COVID protocols for opening and running a safe outdoor market. The Evergreen Brick Works served as an example to markets across the city. During the shutdown of the Market, two new programs that kept local food available to customers, and maintained important connections with the community, were developed.

The Farm in a Box program enabled dedicated market goers to order seasonal produce, fresh-baked bread, local cheeses and more online, and pick it up safely on Saturday mornings. At the same time, farmers and producers maintained an important income stream when their normal outlets were not available to them. The program was a hit: The first week's boxes sold out in 24 hours, and the program ultimately served over 1,500 customers.

With the generous support of loyal donors, Evergreen expanded the idea by partnering with YMCA Danforth Women's Shelter, Toronto Council Fire and The Neighbourhood Organization to create the Healthy Food for All program. Volunteers packed boxes and served over 50 families a week, providing nourishing, local foods to marginalized community members.

While temporary, these two programs allowed members of the community to have access to fresh food – a vital component of building healthy and sustainable cities.

Advance Evergreen Brick Works as an internationally recognized community hub and demonstration centre for urban innovation.

2020 marked 10 years of excellence and innovation for the Evergreen Brick Works as we continued to showcase the types of changes we hope to see in cities. Despite the pandemic, it was an exciting year in which we created new programs, accelerated others, and took our programming online to create accessible, innovative experiences with some digital twists.



“

Once again, we just want to thank Evergreen and the donors for this amazing work and the direct impact on these families. This [Healthy Food for All] has been a tremendous amount of support to these individual families. Each and every one of them have continued to express their gratitude multiple times.

- The Neighbourhood Organization Staff

[Read more about Evergreen's Farm in a Box program →](#)



I wanted to say thank you for organizing the session for us yesterday and for the subsidy approval. Joanna and Noa [the outdoor educators] were amazing and the kids were so enthusiastic about the session. It is the best one we have had on Zoom to date.

- Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture



Photo: Kristin Li, *Prison Dispatches*, 2020, Evergreen Brick Works



Logan MacDonald, *Fruit*, 2020, Evergreen Brick Works



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #1

Evergreen Public Art Program refocus importance of shared spaces

After the events of 2020, Evergreen wanted to create deeper discussions around the inequities in urban environments and public spaces. Evergreen Public Art put out a call to artists for two projects that addressed these issues. Artists Kristin Li and Logan MacDonald were selected to create original “living” works for display at Evergreen Brick Works. In *Prison Dispatches*, Li created an interactive map that draws attention to prisons and detention centres in Ontario, challenging the prison system, which maintains social order by removing certain people from local environments.

Logan MacDonald collaborated with Isaac Crosby, Ojibwa farmer and Lead Hand in Urban Agriculture at Evergreen, on *Fruit*, a piece centred on the planting and care of pawpaw trees - Indigenous fruit trees that were once populous in Southern Ontario. The container gardens bring attention to the ways our spaces are controlled by colonial value systems and refocus our perspective on the historical and ongoing restrictions for Indigenous people in the area.

[Watch interview with Kristin Li on *Prison Dispatches* →](#)

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #2

Recreating the magic of outdoor spaces - online

When schools shut down across the country, Evergreen’s Outdoor Educators recreated the magic of our outdoor education programs with a unique and immersive virtual nature-based excursion called Virtually Outdoors. This program offered a suite of live, curriculum-connected virtual field trips that emphasized exploring nature in your own space. With activities like nature bingo, nature mapping and animal-inspired yoga, students were immersed online in field trips that engaged their bodies, minds, and senses. Thanks to our partners and donors, the Virtually Outdoors program was made available free of charge to many schools in high priority neighbourhoods.

We also knew there was a broader need for outdoor educational resources. Our Outdoor Classroom Newsletter shared resources and field-tested tips for bringing learning outside to over 5,800 families and educators this year

[Read more about Evergreen’s Virtually Outdoors program →](#)



CHALLENGE 2

Create, improve, and revitalize public spaces across Canada.

Canadians want more public spaces to engage with nature, and connect with each other. Throughout the year, Evergreen collaborated with schools, communities, and public space owners to create standout public spaces and livable communities.

STORIES OF IMPACT

Evergreen pilot program makes school grounds green and climate resilient

Schools are a large and important component of public spaces in cities – from acting as hubs for children to learn and play, to providing vital spaces for people to interact. Especially in challenging times, these outdoor places are critical to community wellbeing. Building on Evergreen’s decades of work on school grounds, a new iteration of the School Ground Greening program was launched in 2020: Climate Ready Schools, with support from a generous group of funders. The pilot will provide a guide for other schools to adapt their grounds to changing climate through managing aspects like stormwater on site and moderating temperature and wind speed with topographic changes and vegetation. Designed with deep school and community input, these grounds will better nurture child development, increase outdoor play, and service the broader community by adding value outside of school hours. The initial pilot project began in the fall of 2020 at Irma Coulson Public School, part of Halton District School Board in Milton, Ontario.

The overall approach transforms the school grounds into a climate-ready oasis. Bringing together best practices and child-friendly lessons learned from around the world the design features climate mitigation measures, ecological services, green space and healthy environments for play and learning.



Photo courtesy of Mike Derblich

[Read more about Climate Ready Schools pilot project →](#)



Photo courtesy of Clare Scott

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #1

Bicycle Hub gives residents a chance to learn and be active

Even COVID-19 could not stop the Gateway Bicycle Hub from rolling through another successful season, as it continued to offer valuable programming for the community.

The Hub offered residents in the high-needs neighbourhoods of Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Parks the opportunity to learn how to repair and maintain their own bikes, and encouraged cyclists to explore the amazing trails of the Toronto Ravine system. Through 64 virtual workshops, curbside pick-up and repair, and smaller in-person groups, the Hub offered DIY services, maintenance help and repair tips for free to the community. Participants could also receive a bike in exchange for volunteering hours to make it road ready. Through the program, repairs to more than 560 bikes were completed, diverting them from landfill, and connecting more than 500 residents to the fabric of the city.

[Read more about Evergreen's Gateway Bicycle Hub →](#)



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #2

Exciting vision could turn Toronto's downtown thoroughfare into green space

Evergreen is proud to collaborate in a vision to turn a section of University Avenue into a 90-acre park, running from Queen's Park to the Toronto waterfront. The proposed plan would provide people with a chance to travel by bike or foot from the historic provincial parliament buildings down to the waterfront while enjoying the green spaces along the way. Along with Evergreen, the team includes landscape architects, city builders, non-profit organizations and citizens who are creating this exciting concept to link and transform existing green spaces into natural walkways, bike paths and cultural installations.

[Read more about University Avenue greening project →](#)



Love the design — such a perfect blend of function, play and sustainability. Thank you for creating such a thoughtful space for our children and community.

- Parent, Irma Coulsen Public School

A photograph showing three people in a meeting. On the left, a woman with dark hair in a ponytail is looking towards the center. In the middle, a woman with glasses and a dark sweater is speaking. On the right, a man in a suit is partially visible, looking towards the woman in the center.

CHALLENGE 3

STORIES OF IMPACT

Innovative Future Cities Canada: #UnexpectedSolutionsreimagined the future of cities

On the heels of the pandemic and amid strong calls for racial equity, communities around the world need to rethink, redesign and rebuild many aspects of their cities to address the challenges that are faced. Evergreen provided a platform to share new ideas, ask questions, and search for answers together.

Future Cities Canada: #UnexpectedSolutions was a six-week virtual program supported by Future Cities Canada, lead partners and other sponsors. It had over 3,000 registrants and included 210 speakers, and 66 sessions, featuring workshops, panel discussions and live Q&As on how cities can build resilience, equity and inclusion. The virtual event brought people, ideas, platforms, and innovations together from across sectors and around the globe to address these urgent issues. Artists, mayors, placemaking experts, and corporate leaders, among others, weighed in on issues such as arts and cultural heritage, smart cities, housing and infrastructure, placekeeping and placemaking, and climate change.

[Join us for the 2021 Future Cities Canada Summit →](#)

Activate and convene cross-sectoral networks.

Collaborative tools, and a cross-sectoral exchange of ideas to influence policy and action are critical in solving the complex issues facing our cities. Evergreen continued, albeit in new ways, to create, adapt, and amplify urban development solutions to make our cities more livable, green, and prosperous for all.



Photographer Edward Burtynsky in an #UnexpectedSolutions session



I believe the organizers found a perfect format, raised the most important topics and invited the most progressive speakers from around the world.

We need MORE of these conversations and MORE examples of what is DONE. Thank you, it was an absolutely incredible, positive, and inspiring learning experience.

- Post-event
Survey Respondent



Photo courtesy of Cole Garside

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #1

Digital collaboration for better communities

As we move forward, community leaders and local governments are focused on safety and connectedness as key solutions for our social and economic recovery.

In 2020, the Community Solutions Network, led by Future Cities Canada's lead Evergreen, with technical partner Open North and partners across Canada, delivered information to municipal and community leaders to build the skills needed to navigate the open smart cities landscape through advisory services and event-based programs. Demand for these services rose during the pandemic as local governments and Indigenous communities had to increase their capacity and broad competencies required for virtual and online service delivery.

The Community Solutions Portal, a podcast series, various virtual events, toolkits, and research briefs helped inform solutions to critical issues, including the challenges of the pandemic. For example, a research brief used Montreal's emergency food response to COVID-19 as the basis for a food policy framework for local communities.

[Explore the Community Solutions Network resources →](#)

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT #2

Supporting new ideas for the future of housing

Creating safe and affordable living spaces for everyone takes great ideas. And great ideas need guidance, mentorship and resources to come to life.

Through the Housing Supply Challenge Support Program, launched in 2020, Evergreen helps applicants advance their housing supply submissions to the Housing Supply Challenge, by providing guidance on the application process and connecting applicants to share challenges and solutions. Supported by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the Challenge encourages community stakeholders to help break down the barriers that limit new housing supply.

[Read more about Housing Supply Challenge Support Program →](#)



CHALLENGE 4

Develop and codify Evergreen’s design process as a demonstration of urban innovation and a key market differentiator.

This unique design process helped Evergreen respond to the year’s challenges with resilience and creativity, and brought an improved level of programming to the many stakeholders who depend on us.

STORIES OF IMPACT

A year of learning. A year of impact.

We are so grateful for the continued support from our community, our staff, partners, volunteers and funders, in a year marked by uncertainty and change. Throughout 2020, Evergreen focused on creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive work environment to further strengthen its culture and the contributions we made to its communities.

Evergreen’s team created the necessary safety protocols and procedures to keep staff, and programs thriving. A Recovery Committee created new systems for safe re-opening during the various phases of lockdowns. As an example, a caregiver leave program gave relief to the staff members caring for family members during the pandemic.

[Read more about Evergreen’s COVID-19 Resiliency →](#)



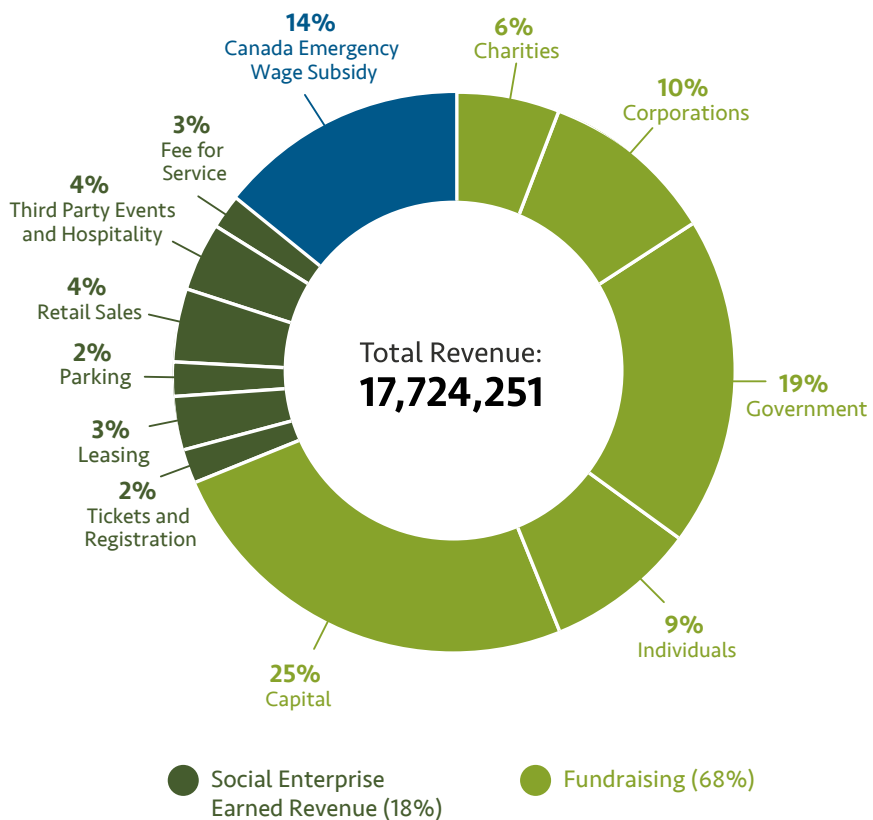
The direction we are taking, the experiences we have had during the year, and the learning that has resulted will combine to make us a resilient organization as we move ahead through 2021 and beyond.

- Geoff Cape, Evergreen Chief Executive Officer

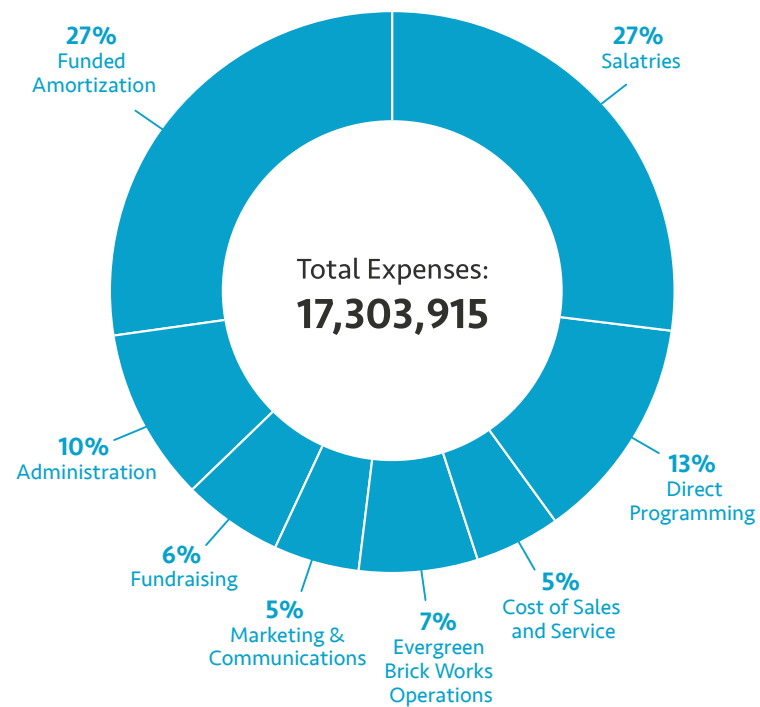


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Thank You to Our Donors and Board of Directors

Evergreen's national impact is made possible thanks to the generous support of public and private funders and our leadership volunteers. We are proud to acknowledge the following individuals, organizations, foundations, and partners whose contributions totalled to \$1,000 or more from January 1 to December 31, 2020.

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Want to discuss a long-term partnership? Contact Director of Development, Suzy Wilcox at swilcox@evergreen.ca