

LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



Outstanding Renewal Enterprises, LLC
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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

2021 was a complicated year.

In a larger sense, Covid vaccines started to roll out and a hopeful, more familiar New York City began to emerge. Many of our previously suspended programs came back stronger than before.

- After a one-year hiatus, our environmental education program returned with a focus on food justice as a direct response to the inequities that the pandemic illuminated.
- Despite losing our Gowanus E-waste Warehouse in 2020, we provided 46 much-appreciated e-waste collection events across NYC.
- Our food scrap drop-off sites expanded to Southern Brooklyn, an area that had not had access to composting programs in the past.

Simultaneously, we endured considerable grief as East River Park, our home for the past two decades, began closing down for the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction. We closed the environmental learning center, dismantled the compost yard, relocated native plantings, and moved our office space. As a result, so much of our work has needed to change and adapt to these new and unfamiliar circumstances.

However, what I am most proud of is that we never skipped a beat — even while moving all materials out of East River Park, we never canceled a food scrap drop-off site. Our programs have adapted and even grown. To accomplish all of this takes a truly dedicated team, one that has worked even harder under these tough circumstances, responding to this change with strength and resilience.

The work that we do is so important in the face of an escalating climate crisis. With your support, we can find a way forward not only to seemingly overwhelming problems but also to hurdles in our way.

We look forward to continuing to chart a way to a more sustainable and just future, and we invite you to join us on this journey.

—Christine Datz-Romero



MISSION

The Lower East Side Ecology Center has pioneered community-based models in urban sustainability since 1987. We provide unique e-waste and composting services, environmental stewardship opportunities, and educational programming to New Yorkers.



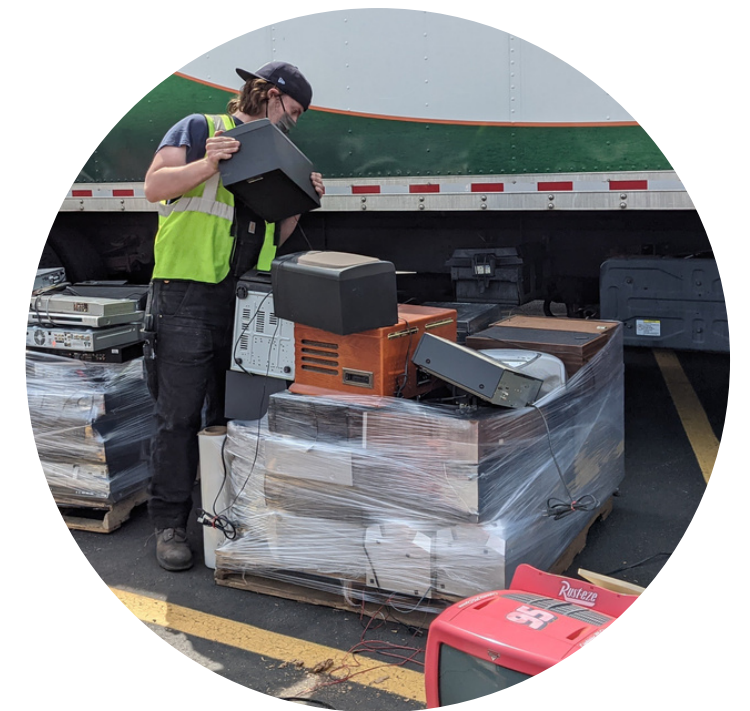
Community Compost



Stewardship



Environmental Education



Electronic Recycling

COMMUNITY COMPOST

In 2021 we:

- Composted 2,328,141 pounds of organic waste (food scraps and wood chips)
- Operated 20 food scrap drop-off sites
- Provided technical support to 25 community-managed food scrap drop-off sites
- Donated 352 cubic yards of finished compost to community greening groups

The Ecology Center has been providing community composting programs since 1990. In 2021 our community compost program saw tremendous growth as it bounced back from pandemic-related cuts and provided composting opportunities to more New Yorkers than ever before. Over the past year, we expanded our food scrap drop-off sites and added 11 sites to Southern Brooklyn, an area that has historically lacked access to composting services. Through this expansion and the growth of existing drop-off sites, about 3,900 participants use our drop-off sites each week.

We also helped to expand composting access across Manhattan through partnerships with 25 community groups that manage their own composting programs. To expand the capacity of these groups, we provide them with training, in-kind resources, and the opportunity to receive a food scrap hauling service if they cannot compost their materials on-site.

The end of 2021 also brought a big shift in our composting operations. With the launch of the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction, the site of our composting operation in East River Park has closed. Our on-site composting has been paused until a new site is built in Canarsie, Brooklyn, for us to operate during the remainder of the ESCR construction. We are working with city agencies to incorporate a new compost yard in the ESCR construction and are looking forward to our ultimate return to East River Park.



"Since we rebooted our Community Compost Program in the Spring of 2021, we've worked closely with the LES Ecology Center. They've assisted us with ample resources and outreach to help resume our on-site composting and extend food scrap drop off to our Harlem community. The LES Ecology Center's role in the NYC Compost Project is essential to connect New York's many organizations and communities to achieve a sustainable future for our city."

- Harlem Grown



“Each year, over 6 tons of electronic waste is spared from our local waste stream by the Lower East Side Ecology Center’s electronic waste collection at our store. This provides incredible benefits for our community, protecting our neighborhood from both the small nuisance of litter and illegal dumping and the large threat of human and environmental exposure to the toxic compounds in these items.”
—Flatbush Food Coop

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

In 2021 we:

- Hosted 46 electronic waste recycling events
- Collected and recycled 574,561 pounds of electronic waste

The Ecology Center has diverted unwanted electronics from the waste stream since 2003. During the past year, we reached an important milestone in the program, diverting over 10 million (10,935,091, to be exact) pounds of unwanted electronics from landfills or incineration! This accomplishment makes us the largest non-municipal provider of electronic recycling services in New York State.

With the closure of the Gowanus E-waste Warehouse in 2020 due to development pressures, our e-waste program looks slightly different from how it did in the past. In terms of e-waste collection, we went back to the pop-up event model of our early years. In 2021 we provided 46 collection events in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens and collected an astonishing 574,561 pounds of unwanted electronics from 12,699 participating households.

The loss of the warehouse also ended one of the most cherished and important aspects of this program: reuse. The reuse part of our work included refurbishing electronics to be used again, providing access to affordable devices, a prop library for film/media rental, and an Artist in Residence program. We miss not having a permanent space for these programs and are exploring ways to bring this part of our program back.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In 2021 we:

- Coordinated 10 fishing clinics with 116 participants
- Led 22 field trips to schools and camp groups, reaching 354 participants
- Piloted two food justice program cohorts offering 15 workshops
- Create a summer event series reaching 100 participants

The education programs at the Ecology Center aim to provide urban environmental education to New Yorkers of all ages through meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities.

In 2021 we relaunched our education programs after a one-year hiatus and offered 60 workshops for over 700 participants, including children and adults. We participated in Day in the Life of the Hudson River, City of Water Day, Jane's Walk, the NYC Department of Education STEM Fair, and a Green Infrastructure Walking Tour while fostering partnerships with community organizations such as Bash the Trash, Solar One, BioBus, GOLES, Loisaida, Essex Market, and Billion Oyster Project. We engaged local schools and the general public in programming about urban ecology, street trees, and the estuary.

We resumed fishing clinics for the first time since the start of the pandemic. We offered 10 clinics for 116 participants in East River Park and caught three fish: two striped bass and a black sea bass. At each event, we collected water quality data for the East River Ichthyological Alliance database, including water temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, turbidity, and pH.

Most notably, we launched the Food Justice Project in partnership with Henry Street Settlement. This program engages youth and adults in education programming about food systems, social and environmental justice, health, and horticulture.



"Growing up in a lower-income neighborhood, it's harder to find fresh fruits and vegetables locally. It's frustrating that the foods we eat aren't always accessible to everyone like they should be. But learning and teaching others about where we can access food and/or grow [it] ourselves was exciting."

-Dominique, Food Justice Program participant





STEWARDSHIP

In 2021 we:

- Planted more than 15,000 bulbs in Seward Park in partnership with Seward Park Conservancy
- Engaged more than 350 volunteers in the stewardship of the East River Park
- Had 46 volunteers carry out street tree care to over 60 street trees on the Lower East Side

Stewardship has been at the core of the Ecology Center since its founding, as we believe that maintaining green spaces is vital for the health of our city. We've worked alongside countless volunteers for more than two decades stewarding East River Park and green spaces throughout the Lower East Side.

Throughout 2021, over 350 individuals volunteered with us in East River Park. Our volunteers join us in this work for so many reasons — from wanting to pitch in and get their hands dirty, or being interested in learning more about native plants, to participating in community or team-building activities with their colleagues.

During the fall of 2021, East River Park began to close down for the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction. As the park went under construction, we focused on stewarding other green spaces throughout the Lower East Side. We organized street tree care events and worked with 46 volunteers to provide some TLC to 60 street trees. Additionally, we planted more than 15,000 bulbs in Seward Park, where we are now headquartered.



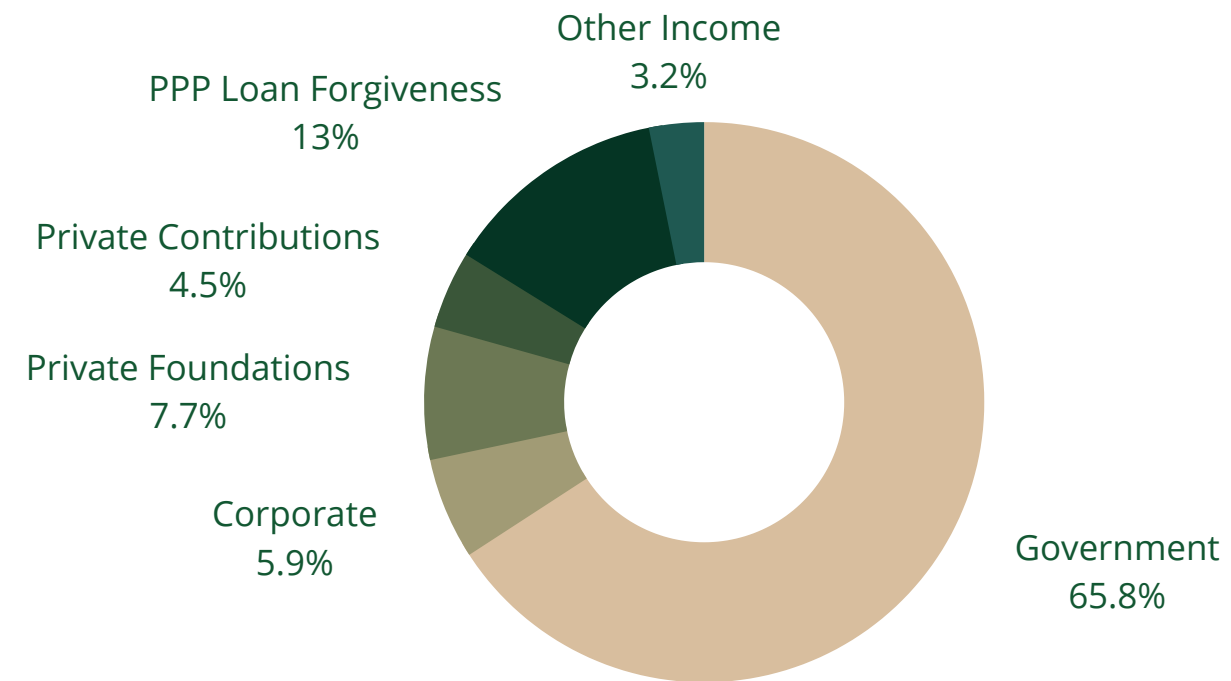
“As a longtime resident of the East Village, I've enjoyed using the East River Park for recreation, exercise, and relaxation for many years and know what a lifeline it is for the local community. Stewardship allows me to indulge my green thumb, learn more about the native species growing here, and help to maintain the park for my neighbors. And I've been composting with the LESEC ever since they started collecting scraps on East 7th Street.”

—B.R. Rolya

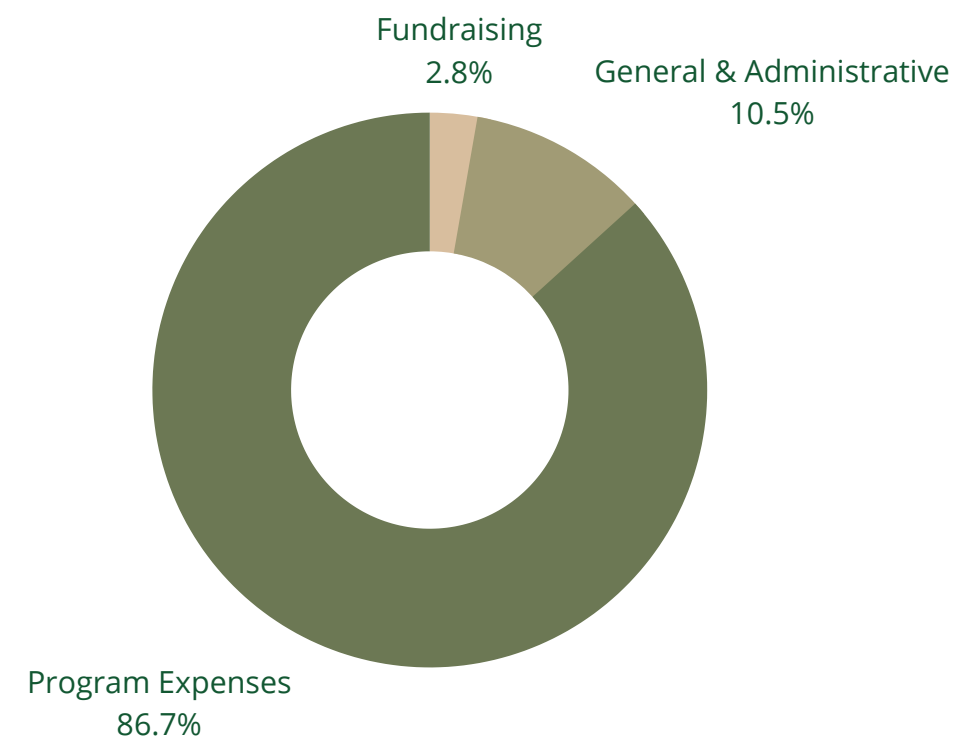
AUDITED 2021 FINANCIALS

January 1, 2021-December 31, 2021

Revenue



Expenses



Revenue

Government	\$1,400,225
Corporate	\$124,552
Private Foundations	\$163,085
Private Contributions	\$95,298
PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$276,400
Other Income	\$67,473
Total Revenue	\$2,127,033

Expenses

Program Expenses	\$1,218,817
General and Administrative	\$147,739
Fundraising	\$38,738
Total Expenses	\$1,405,294

Change in net assets

\$721,739



FALL SOCIAL 2021

During our Fall Social, we celebrate our work and accomplishments and have an opportunity to highlight partners of the organization. At our 2021 Fall Social, we honored Henry Street Settlement (HSS) for the critical work they have provided to the Lower East Side community. During the height of the pandemic, HSS delivered 1 million meals, dispersed nearly \$600,000 in emergency cash assistance and youth stipends, oversaw 10,000-plus wellness phone calls to senior citizens, and provided hundreds of adults and youth with employment opportunities.

We were thrilled to partner with HSS to create the Food Justice Program, which offers educational opportunities to learn about small-scale food production and environmental justice.

SUPPORTERS

Elected Officials

New York City Council Members:

Adrienne Adams

Justin Brannan

Margaret Chin

Daniel Dromm

James Gennaro

Robert Holden

Speaker Corey Johnson

Ben Kallos

Peter Koo

Brad Lander

Stephen Levin

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Helen Rosenthal

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Harvey Epstein

New York State Senator:

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CT Charitable Foundation

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Closed Loop Partners

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Franklin Templeton

HomeLight

Morgan Stanley

Moxie Bookkeeping & Coaching Inc.

NYC Ferry

O'Melveny & Myers LLP

Patagonia

Riskified

Sims Municipal Recycling

Something Special Studios

South Street Seaport

System of Service

Program Partners

Alliance for Kips Bay

Bash the Trash

Big Reuse

Billion Oyster Project

BioBus

Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Brotherhood Sister Sol

CAMBA

Chinatown Partnership

East River Ichthyological Alliance

Earth Celebration

Earth Matter NY

Edible Schoolyard NYC

Essex Market

Friends of Corlears Hook Park

Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

GrowNYC

Gowanus Canal Conservancy

Good Old Lower East Side

Operation Green Thumb

Green City Force

Greenwood Cemetery

Harlem Grown

Hell's Kitchen Commons

Henry Street Settlement

Institute for Local Self-Reliance

Lower Eastside Girls Club

Maggie's Garden

Materials for the Arts

New York Botanical Garden

New York Harbor School

NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

NYC Department of Sanitation

New York University

Pleasant Village Community Garden

Queens Botanical Garden

Queens County Farm Museum

Rodale Pleasant Park Community
Garden

Seward Park Conservancy

Save Our Compost Coalition

Snug Harbor Cultural Center &
Botanical Garden

Solar One

Sure We Can



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Ni Wang, Compost Associate
Jermaine Wilson, Operations Coordinator



Thank you for being part of this journey with us and keeping the optimism alive to build a more resilient city. Our ability to continue our unique work to protect, improve, and enrich the city's environment depends directly on the support of engaged environmentalists like you. Please consider giving a donation this year in support of our work to pioneer and advocate for urban sustainability in New York. When you support LES Ecology Center, every small victory we achieve against climate change is also your own victory.

Thank you for sharing our vision, thank you for your compassion, and thank you for your support. We could do none of this without you.

Sincerely,
LES Ecology Center Team

How to support our work:
Visit lesecologycenter.org and select "Donate" in the main menu

