



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Breaking Barriers
&
Building
Communities

WALNUT WAY

CONSERVATION CORP



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2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**Breaking Barriers &
Building Communities**

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Antonio Butts
Executive Director



Dear Friends & Partners,

For twenty-five years, Walnut Way has operated from one premise: that Lindsay Heights residents – not outside institutions – should own the systems that determine their wellness, work, and wealth. Every program, enterprise, and intervention on these blocks flows from that.

This report covers three years of proving that premise. Our Healthy Homes initiative moved from assessments into construction – completing our first net zero home on North 15th Street and delivering critical and emergency repairs that keep families housed, healthy, and building equity.

Blue Skies Landscaping grew into a green infrastructure enterprise – installing bioswales, maintaining wetlands, and training residents for environmental stewardship careers while generating earned revenue for this organization. Taste of Lindsay Heights opened as a social enterprise cafe, putting fresh food and local jobs on the same block where we do the rest of our work.

We built affordable broadband through Resilient Resident WiFi – connecting homes, apartments, and businesses to high-speed internet as a utility, not a luxury. We stood up a resident-governed Neighborhood Improvement District where homeowners direct dollars toward economic opportunity and displacement prevention on their terms. Our environmental justice work reached the state level – intervening at the Public Service Commission on rate cases, testifying against gas buildouts, and grounding clean energy policy in the lived reality of energy burden.

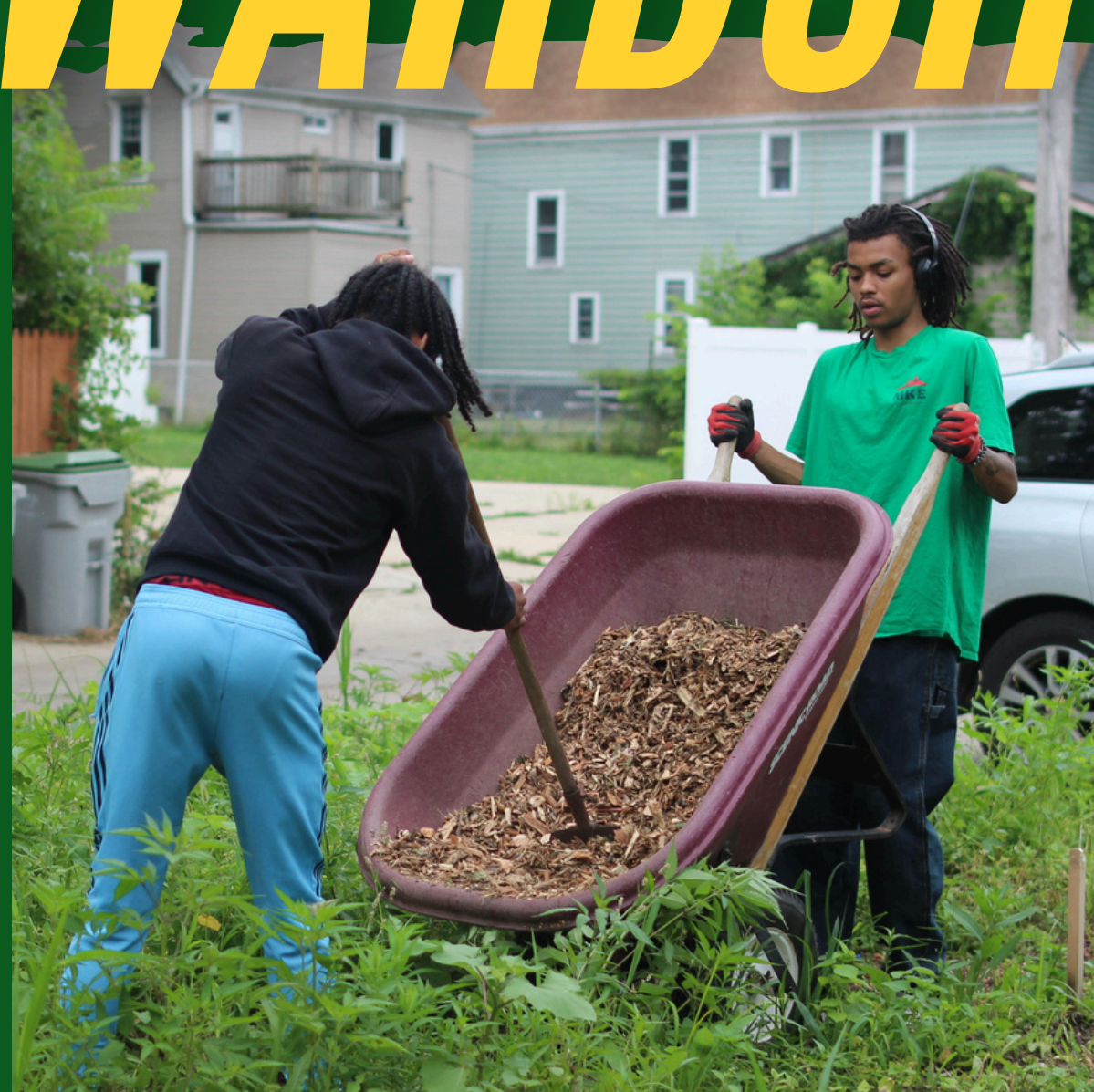
This is community-led comprehensive development. Not a slogan – an operating system. Wellness, work, and wealth, interconnected and resident-controlled.

With gratitude and resolve,

Executive Director, Walnut Way



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



GROWING YOUTH LEADERSHIP

“Our star Intern **Justin Banks** was exceptional in his care, attention and diligence to the job. He exemplified what we want the GYL program to be.

Jasmin Hoover
Urban Ag Coordinator



Growing Youth Leadership (GYL) engages neighborhood teens in paid internships that build leadership, teamwork, and urban agriculture skills while supporting Lindsay Heights' local food system. This year, interns grew produce for neighbors and the Fondy Farmers Market and gained hands-on kitchen experience at the Taste of Lindsay Heights Café. Youth learned to identify crops, manage planting and weeding, and practice safe food preparation—taking pride in seeing their work grow and nourish the community.

GROWING YOUTH LEADERSHIP



CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY



WE LEARN THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION



STEWARDSHIP





COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

Walnut Way identifies Lindsay Heights **resident leaders** who naturally **connect neighbors**, then nurtures their growth as trained **community contractors**, compensating them for organizing, outreach, and projects that strengthen neighborhood ties and build **community wealth** through local talent, relationships, and shared opportunity.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS



 TASTE OF
LINDSAY
HEIGHTS

Weekly Tasty Roll Bike Ride
Hosted By RED, BIKE & GREEN



RECLAIMING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD
25
ENGAGED RESIDENT SURVEYS

EARNING OVER
\$3800
IN STIPENDS THAT CIRCULATE BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY

COLLECTIVELY CONTRIBUTING
194
PAID SURVEY HOURS

THE RON SURVEYS GATHER **HYPER-LOCAL DATA** FROM LINDSAY HEIGHTS RESIDENTS TO UNDERSTAND **HOUSING CONDITIONS, SAFETY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITIES**, SO FUTURE INVESTMENTS, PROGRAMS, AND ADVOCACY ARE DRIVEN BY **RESIDENT VOICE AND LIVED EXPERIENCE** RATHER THAN OUTSIDE ASSUMPTIONS.

**RESIDENT-LED
ENGAGEMENT**

Investment in Historically Marginalized Businesses

Walnut Way designates a substantial portion of its operating budget to local, community-based professionals, including community contractors, consultants, legal, IT, accounting and safety services.



▲ **41% GROWTH FROM 2024 TO 2025**

Top categories shown. Source: Quickbooks P&L

BLUE SKIES LANDSCAPING



Blue Skies Landscaping (BSL) is a workforce and conservation program that delivers **green infrastructure** and **full-service landscaping** across Milwaukee while creating quality jobs for neighborhood residents. In 2025, BSL maintained **183 bioswales**, provided green infrastructure maintenance at **28 sites** citywide, extended snow removal and cleanup contracts with the City of Milwaukee, and advanced **workforce pathways** through **pre-apprenticeship training** on Healthy Homes reconstruction projects on 15th Street and 8th Street.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

BIOSWALE MAINTENANCE



PRE EVENT
STORMWATER
CAPTURE

105,997

GALLONS

HIGHLAND BLVD
BIOSWALES

134

NATIVE PLANTS
INSTALLED

BIOSWALE MAINTENANCE HELPS **REDUCE FLOOD RISK** WHILE **IMPROVING WATER QUALITY**, **STRENGTHENING URBAN VITALITY**, **PROTECTING HOMES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**. KEEPING MILWAUKEE NEIGHBORHOODS **SAFER, HEALTHIER**, AND MORE **RESILIENT** DURING HEAVIER, MORE FREQUENT STORMS

Environmental Stewardship Summary

In 2025, Walnut Way's environmental work felt like tending both soil and spirit, and, increasingly, neighborhood wealth and power. Growing Youth Leadership turned neighborhood blocks into open-air classrooms, where young people learned to read the land, coax food from it, and then circulate that value locally through stipends, skill-building, and holiday lunch giveaways.

Blue Skies Landscaping stitched beauty, function, and opportunity together—rain gardens, native plantings, and trees rising from once-vacant lots like quiet acts of resistance against flooding, heat, neglect, and disinvestment, while paid contracts and green jobs kept resources and expertise in the hands of residents.

Through Reclaiming Our Neighborhood, residents moved from program participants to co-designers—leading data collection, naming priorities, and shaping projects so that every new bed planted, lot reclaimed, and home reached becomes part of a resident-led plan to stay, thrive, and build equity in place.

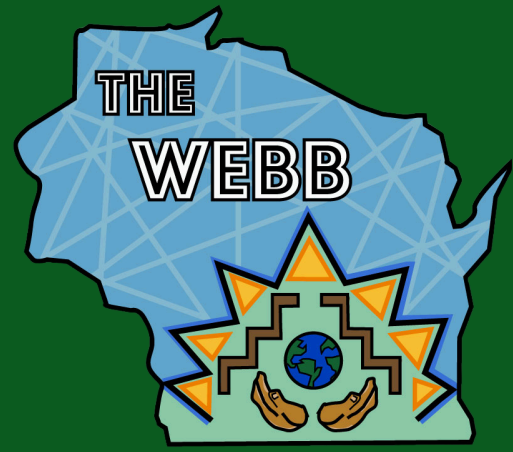
Stewardship became less a program and more a shared practice of loving place and claiming power, with every bed planted and meal served teaching that resilience and wealth can grow from the ground up when residents lead the way.





ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE





THE WEBB

WISCONSIN ECO-JUSTICE BASE BUILDERS



The WEBB (Wisconsin Ecojustice Base Builders) is a statewide, community-rooted formation building bottom-up power to transform Wisconsin's energy, housing, food, and infrastructure systems.

Organizing with frontline communities to end extraction in all its forms and build a future grounded in dignity, abundance, and collective self-determination.



Base Building Power

We organized and participated in public demonstrations addressing environmental justice concerns, including opposition to gas plants in Oak Creek, the Fight for Your Life campaign, and the No Data Centers in Wisconsin initiative.



Capacity Building Grant Program

2023 – 2024

\$86,651

EJII Grantee: \$16,436

2025

\$136,549

EJII Grantee: \$108,237

3-Year: \$223,200 to community organizations

Walnut Way directs dollars to EJII grantees, community organizations, and neighborhood residents. Seeding grassroots projects that build local-term capacity and strengthen the fabric of Lindsay Heights.



HEALTHY HOMES

Healthy Homes is an initiative aimed at **improving** the standard of living for our community.

We transformed aging, deteriorated houses by **restoring** and **retrofitting** them with **green infrastructure** such as solar panels, energy-efficient thermostats, electric stoves, and heat pumps—giving families the opportunity to own their own **sustainable** home.



MAKING HEALTHIER HOMES FOR THE COMMUNITY



NET ZERO – HEALTHY HOME INITIATIVE



Families save more than 70% on energy costs each year, bringing monthly bills close to zero and reducing the risk of shut-offs

Net zero homes help Lindsay Heights by fixing up older houses, creating local jobs, and cutting pollution for a healthier neighborhood.

Homes are safer and more comfortable with better insulation, cleaner electric systems, and protection from harmful materials like lead and asbestos.

RESILIENT RESIDENT, RESILIENT COMMUNITY: LAUNCHING WALNUT WAY'S WIFI SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

This year, Walnut Way launched the Resilient Resident Resilient Community WiFi affordability initiative, transforming years of neighborhood organizing into a community-owned broadband social enterprise. Built on a grant funded fiber backbone with 10 Gbps capacity and five live sites, the network already links the Innovation & Wellness Commons, Legacy Loft, Welford Sanders, the Walnut Way 4plexus and Seven Day Adventist Church, creating a powerful digital spine through our neighborhood.

The initiative's purpose is simple: make fast, reliable internet a basic utility that every Lindsay Heights household and small business can afford, while generating earned revenue to sustain Walnut Way's mission. Free or low-cost public WiFi acts as an on-ramp, with affordable in-unit service for residents and managed WiFi for businesses and multi-family buildings layered on top.



COMMUNITY OWNED WIFI

TOTAL GUESTS
261
ACCESSED

AVERAGE DWELL
63
MINUTES

SINGLE-VISIT
159
USERS

WALNUT WAY COMMUNITY WIFI CULTIVATES A **LOYAL USER** BASE, WITH A CORE GROUP OF GUESTS RETURNING REGULARLY OVER TIME AND A **BOUNCE RATE OF 0** INDICATING THAT PEOPLE WHO CONNECT TEND TO STAY AND REMAIN ACTIVELY ENGAGED.



Environmental Justice Summary

In 2025, Walnut Way expanded its environmental justice work statewide through The WEBB (Wisconsin Ecojustice Base Builders), our organizing initiative that tackles energy burden, unsafe housing, food access, and digital inequity together as interconnected ecojustice issues. Through The WEBB, we organized residents facing high energy bills and shutoffs, unhealthy homes, unreliable internet, and food insecurity to engage in utility accountability efforts, help shape community solar and net-zero “Healthy Homes” strategies, deepen food sovereignty work rooted in community control over land and nourishment, and leverage Walnut Way’s Community WiFi as critical infrastructure for access to information, telehealth, education, and organizing. This statewide approach ensures that those most impacted by disinvestment help lead Wisconsin’s transition toward clean, affordable energy, healthy housing, equitable food systems, and inclusive digital access.





CELEBRATING 25 YEARS IN LINDSAY HEIGHTS



2025 MANDI AWARDS

THANK YOU



**Executive Director, Antonio Butts,
accepting the BMO Cornerstone
Award**



BMO CORNERSTONE AWARD WINNER

Walnut Way Conservation Corp. received the BMO Cornerstone Award in recognition of its long-term dedication to revitalizing the Lindsay Heights neighborhoods and delivering measurable community impact, particularly through its sustained work in environmental stewardship, neighborhood development, and community-led initiatives.

HARVEST DAY 2025



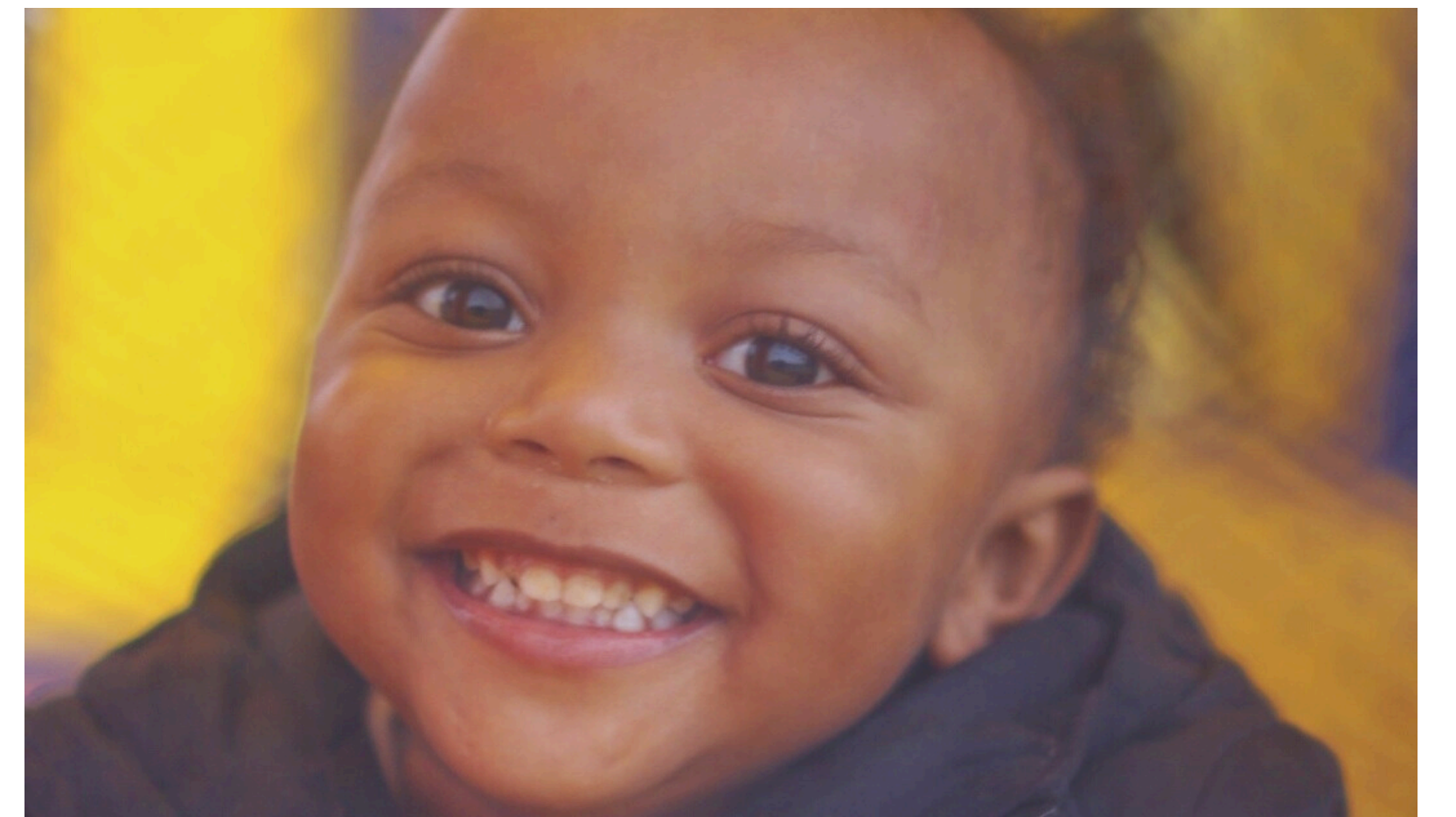
FOOD



FAMILY

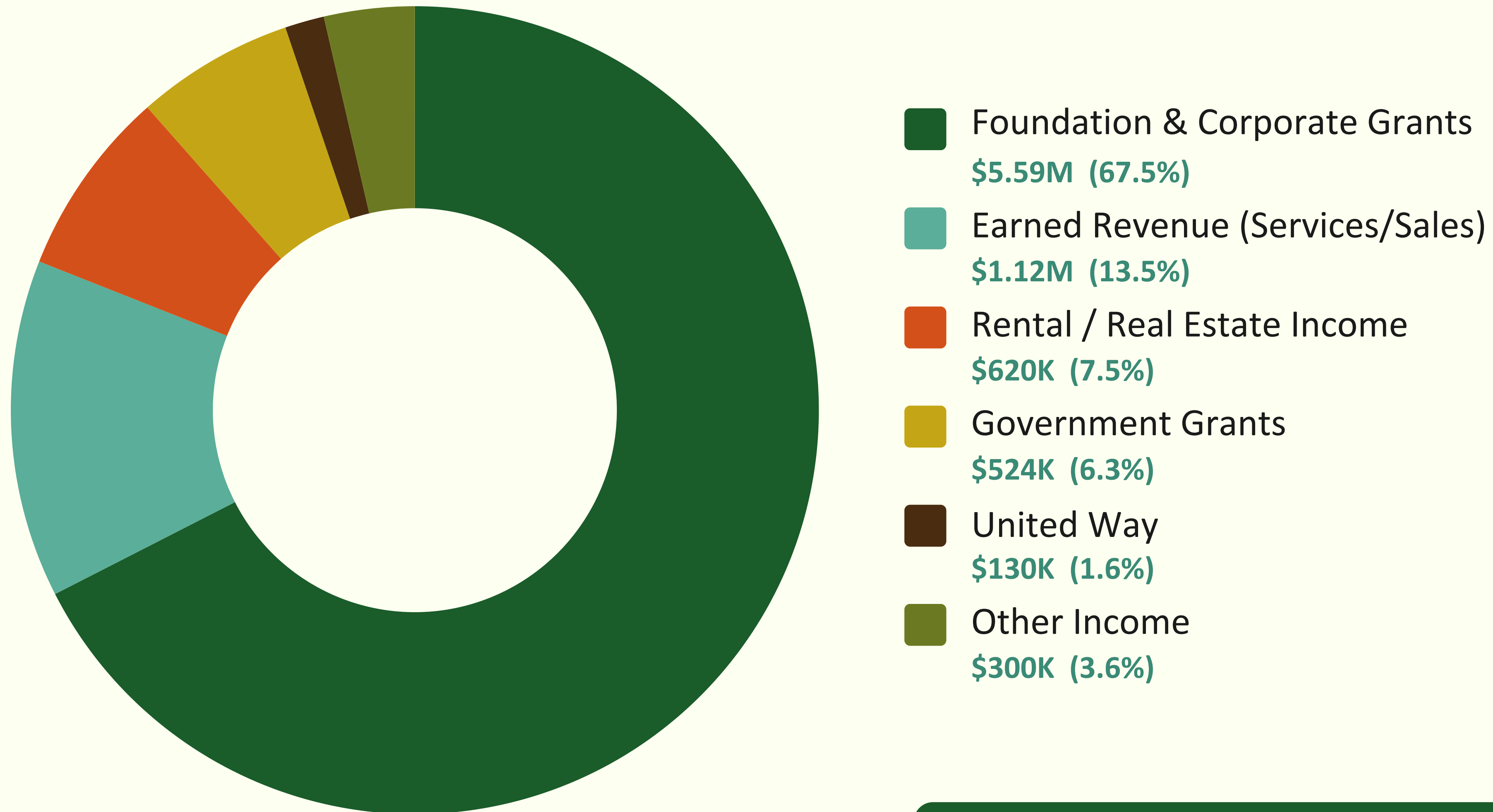


FUN



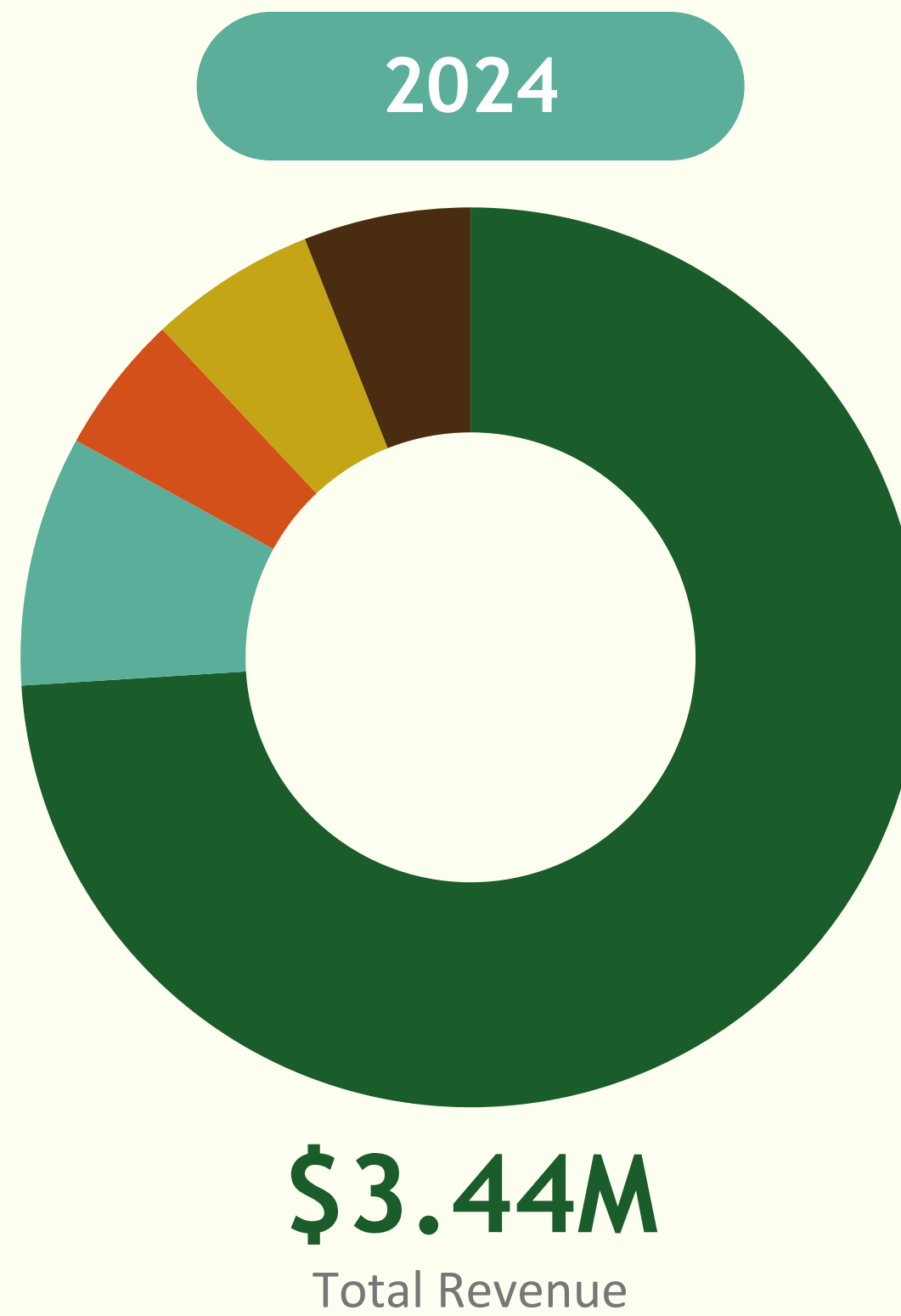
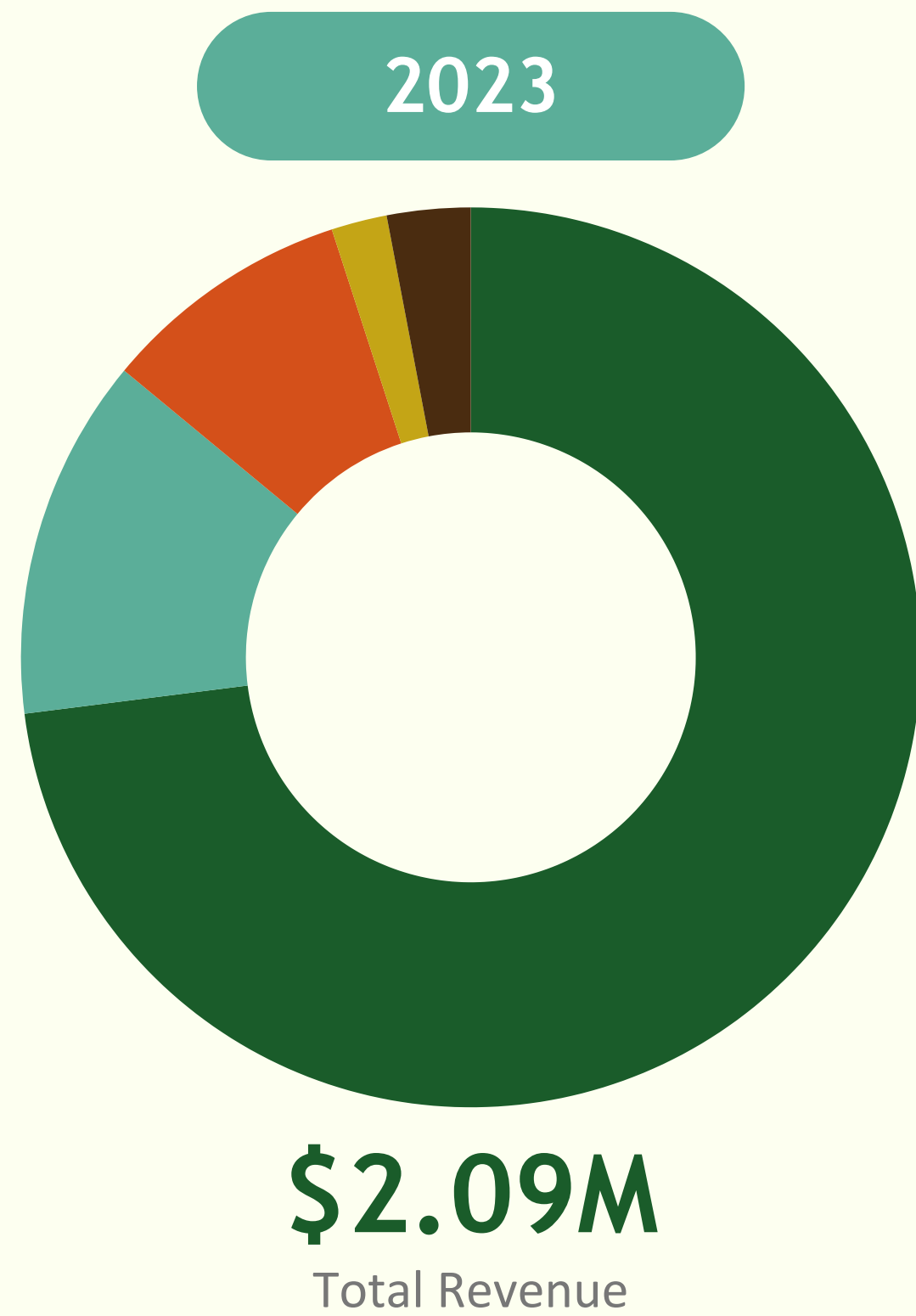
SOURCE OF FUNDS

3-Year Cumulative | 2023 – 2025



3-Year Total Revenue: **\$8.28 Million**

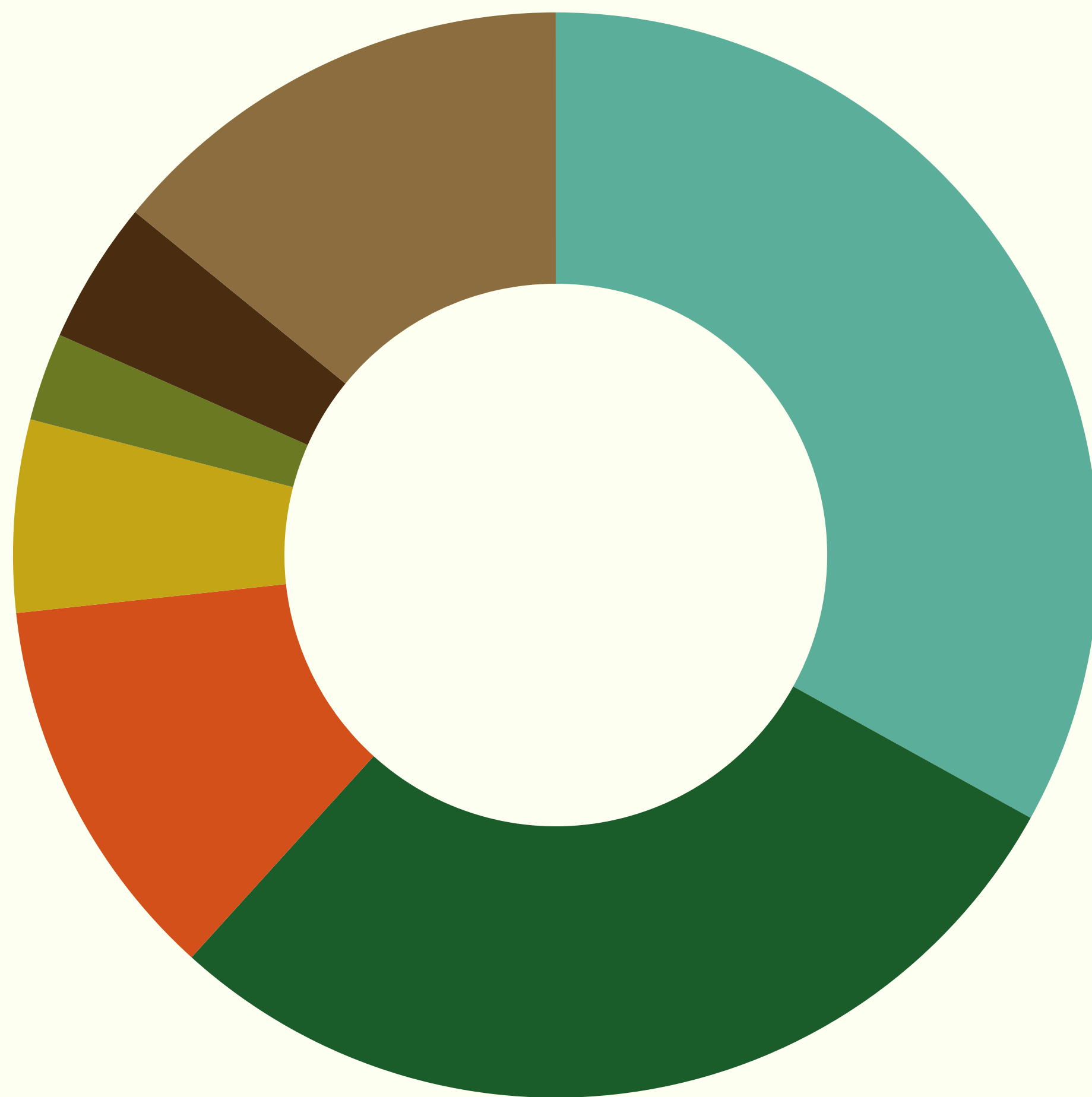
Source of Funds | Year-by-Year



■ Foundation Grants ■ Services/Sales ■ Rental Income ■ Gov Grants ■ Other

How We Deploy Resources

3-Year Cumulative | 2023 – 2025



- Payroll & Workforce
\$2.71M (33.1%)
- Professional Services & Contractors
\$2.35M (28.6%)
- Housing Rehab & Maintenance
\$950K (11.6%)
- Operations & Office
\$470K (5.7%)
- Grants to Partner Organizations
\$215K (2.6%)
- Insurance & Equipment
\$348K (4.2%)
- Depreciation & Other
\$1.16M (14.1%)

3-Year Total Deployed: **\$8.20 Million**

Use of Funds | Year-by-Year

2023



\$2.73M
Total Expenses

2024



\$2.32M
Total Expenses

2025



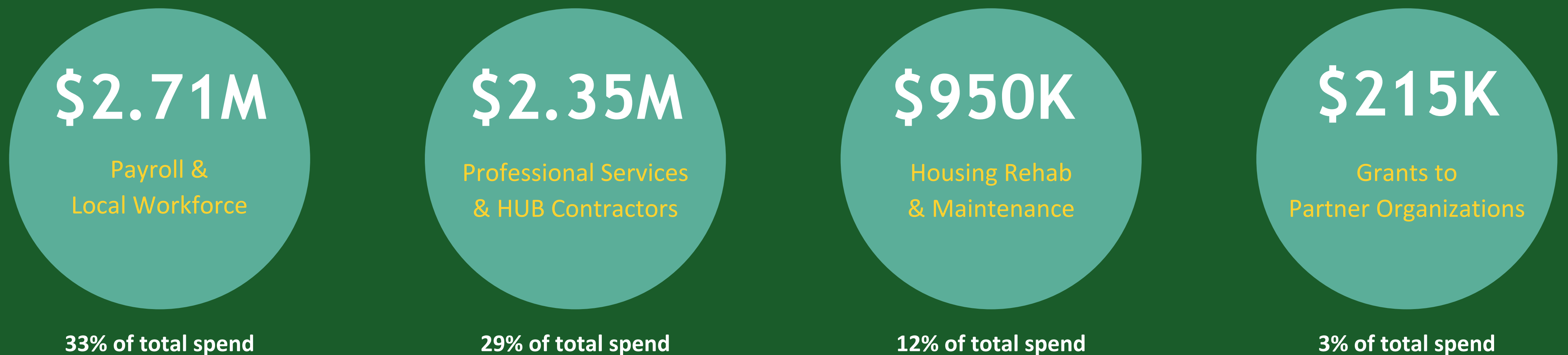
\$2.78M
Total Expenses

Payroll Prof Services Housing/Maint Operations Other

Source: QuickBooks P&L reports 2023–2025; 2023–2024 reconciled to audit

Community Investment Impact

Where \$8.2 Million in funds were deployed | 2023 – 2025



76% of all funds deployed directly supported historically underutilized businesses, local workforce, housing, and community partners

FOUNDATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & BUSINESS DONORS

ARPA COLE

Aurora Health

Bader Foundation

Bradley Foundation

BRICO Foundation

Carbon Free Coalition

City of Milwaukee Department-
of City Development

Congresswoman Gwen Moore

Crown Foundation

Energy Foundation

Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Green Bay Packers Foundation

Knight Foundation

Kohls Hometown Giving

Kroger

MacArthur Foundation

McKnight Foundation

Microsoft

Milwaukee Public Schools

Milwaukee's Earn & Learn

Potawatomi Foundation

Rotary Club

United Way Equity Fund

We Energies

Wisconsin Public Service Commission

Wisconsin Public Service Commission

Wisconsin Voices

Zilber Family Foundation

OUR TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

LaVonda Graham- President
Monique Graham - Secretary
X'Zayvion McCoy - Treasure
Heidi Moore - Member
Dea Wright - Member
Emonia Barnett - Member
Earl Ingram - Member

WALNUT WAY STAFF

Olamilekan Awoniyi
Antonio Butts
Ramona Curry
Chandra Ellis
Jerrilynn Freelon
Gwendolyn Hodges
Alysha Holmes
Zion A Hortman
Michael D Malone
Clyde Martin
Shelby A Martin

SUPPORT TEAM

Pastor Teresa Thomas Boyd
Trasus Wright
Samuel Thurman
Marylin Mitchell
Dawnice Anglin
Anthony 'AJ' Johnson
Yusef Adama
Jake Freeze
Vincent Ashford

Yolanda Odufuwa
Jevon Prowell
Terrence Rayford
Bryan Rogers
Vonadrian Scott
Jovan Siner
Shamikka Smith
Eric R Trunnell
Tiwanda N Ward
Sheyenne Wilson



IN LOVING MEMORY



DEXTRA HADNOT
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the past year and a half, Mr. Hadnot exemplified steadiness and dependability in every circumstance.

He approached both smooth and challenging times with the same composed dedication—a grounding presence our team and neighbors could always rely upon.

Mr. Hadnot will always hold a cherished place in our hearts as a valued member of the Walnut Way and Lindsay Heights family.

We honor his memory with deep respect, peace, and love.



WALNUT WAY

CONSERVATION CORP.

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