



2023 - 2024

# ANNUAL REPORT





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# OUR MISSION

## **The Hort improves human life through horticulture.**

- We create green spaces in all neighborhoods as a vital part of social infrastructure.
- We train people for jobs that grow and sustain green communities.
- We develop fresh approaches to improve New Yorkers' health, well-being, and environment through horticulture.



# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Fiscal Year 2024 marked another year of major successes and milestone achievements for The Hort. Two years ago, we embarked on an ambitious strategic planning initiative, and I am delighted to share the remarkable progress we have made in advancing our mission. This mission, to improve human life through horticulture, has been at the forefront of our efforts, leading to significant strides in various areas and positively impacting communities across New York City.

Our educational programs have doubled the number of students, teachers, children, and parents served, emphasizing climate action and food education. Our therapeutic programs expanded significantly, reaching new populations and showcasing the benefits of engaging with plants. This year, our Urban Greening team planted perennials to reduce carbon footprints and support pollinators, with projects like the Pollinator Port Project and the Atrium at Sumner enhancing greenspaces. Additionally, a new contract with the Department of Transportation has enabled us to serve more areas, maintaining Open Streets, public plazas, and bike boulevards, solidifying our role as leaders in on-ground operations and urban planning.

None of these successes would be possible without the unwavering support of our friends, donors, program participants, Board Members, and the entire Hort community. Your contributions are invaluable, and we look forward to your continued partnership in making New York City greener and healthier.

Thank you for being an important part of what we do!

Warm regards,



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jared Goss'.

Jared Goss  
Chairman





This year, our education team more than doubled the number of students, teachers, children, and parents we served. By introducing new ideas and horticultural knowledge, we cultivated a deep appreciation for nature and urban green spaces throughout New York.





### **Impact on Students**

We served 3,300 students at 41 schools across Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx. Together, we beautified schools, improved students' nutritional literacy, and deepened their appreciation for urban green spaces. Our younger students explored seasonal changes in plants and enjoyed plant-based snacks, while our older students created rain, herb, and pollinator gardens, preparing them to become responsible environmental stewards.

### **Innovative Teacher Training**

We implemented two new teacher training programs focused on climate action and food education. Through our climate action program, we equipped 321 teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the crucial role of plants in mitigating the urban heat island effect.

### **New Curriculum Development**

We devoted over 100 hours to developing a new year-long curriculum centered around seasonal activities. This curriculum, created in collaboration with our therapeutic horticulture team, includes therapeutic elements in every lesson to improve students' physical, mental, and emotional health.

### **Comprehensive Services**

We provided services to students of all grade levels, including those from 11 specialized learning environments such as transfer schools, career and technical schools, and schools focusing on specific educational challenges. We built, restored, and maintained 27 school gardens at partner schools across the city. Among the new gardens were a stormwater-collecting rain garden, two green walls, and a rooftop tea garden boasting green tea, chamomile, orange mint, and lemongrass.





*"This was a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience, receive mentorship from industry experts, and actively contribute to meaningful projects that promote sustainable infrastructure practices."*

**-Anson, Fort Hamilton High School student in our Spring Recess Green Infrastructure Institute**





In Fiscal Year 2024, we emphasized refining our strategy and enhancing communication for public programming. We orchestrated a series of seasonal activations across the city, broadening our engagement to reach more New Yorkers.



## Plant-Focused Community Engagement

This year, we ventured into neighborhood spaces with plant-focused programming, igniting dialogues about the universal appreciation of plants among New Yorkers. By leveraging newly developed spaces like Open Streets, we facilitated discussions on the significance of plants and their impact on urban life.

We ran two city-wide activations: Harvest with The Hort and Bloom with The Hort. Harvest with The Hort involved giveaways and hosting activities on Open Streets throughout the city. Building upon the success of our fall activation, Bloom with The Hort in April delivered even more impactful programming to enrich the lives of New Yorkers.

## Expanding Our Reach

As a pioneering effort for future programs, we organized an event with a street closure for the High School of Environmental Studies. Our collaboration with the Department of Transportation (DOT) led to a noteworthy one-day Open Street for Climate Programming, held outdoors. This educational initiative not only benefited students but also demonstrated the potential for the Open Street model to be adopted by other schools grappling with limited outdoor space.

Looking ahead, we are excited about expanding our programs to Public Space sites in the coming year while maintaining the effective strategies and communication methods established organization-wide.







## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS**

**40+** Public programs delivered through our contract with DOT and through smaller private contracts

**12** Bloom with The Hort Events for Earth Day

**1,500** Edible squash distributed for Harvest with The Hort at Trick or Streets in Fall 2023





# GREENHOUSE AND EDUCATION CENTER

The Hort's programs at the Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park Greenhouse and Education Center offer an inclusive space for individuals to engage with nature and expand their knowledge of gardening and plants through a variety of free public programs and classes.



### **Amplifying Therapeutic Potential**

This year at the Greenhouse and Education Center, we deepened our commitment to public programming that centers the healing power of plants. We welcomed over 20 skilled facilitators who shared their expertise in various topics such as arts, herbalism, cooking, and urban farming through our free drop-in workshops.

### **Revamping the Greenhouse and Learning Garden**

The Greenhouse and Learning Garden remain the cornerstone of our activities. This year, we revamped the 13 beds to align with thematic curricula. These themes, including explorations of human-plant relationships, the journey from flower to fruit, culinary herbs, artistic expressions, and wellness concepts like "breathe easy and rest well," provided a rich backdrop for field trips, cooking classes, urban gardening programs, and special events.


### **Inclusive Public Programs**

Integrating the Community Supported Agriculture model into many of our classes has enabled participants to discover new farm-fresh produce and medicinal herbs, enriching their understanding of sustainable living practices. We also launched the well-attended Gay in the Garden series in which queer folks and their allies can come together to learn horticultural skills in a healing space in the garden.

We will continue to build our partnerships with community members and organizations in Harlem to increase our impact in the neighborhood and reach as many residents as possible with our programming.







*"This place always comes right in time. I don't have the conversations that I'm having here anywhere else. Somehow, every time I come to class, we're talking about something that is going on in my life. I'm so grateful for this place."*

**-Racina, Greenhouse and Education Center program participant**





# THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE

We expanded our reach across the city by providing impactful programming at supportive housing sites, older adult centers, correctional facilities, schools, community centers, and at the Greenhouse and Education Center.





### **Broadening Our Reach and Impact**

Throughout the year, our Therapeutic Horticulture program made significant strides in expanding its reach and impact across diverse communities throughout the city. By providing meaningful programming at various sites such as supportive housing facilities, older adult centers, correctional facilities, schools, community centers, and our own Greenhouse and Education Center, we've touched the lives of individuals facing a range of challenges.

### **Successful Collaborations**

A highlight of the year was our successful collaborations with different departments within The Hort. By working closely with the Horticulture team, we seamlessly integrated therapeutic horticulture principles into landscape design projects. Our collaboration with the Education team led to enhancements in curriculum materials for school programs, enriching the educational experience for participants.

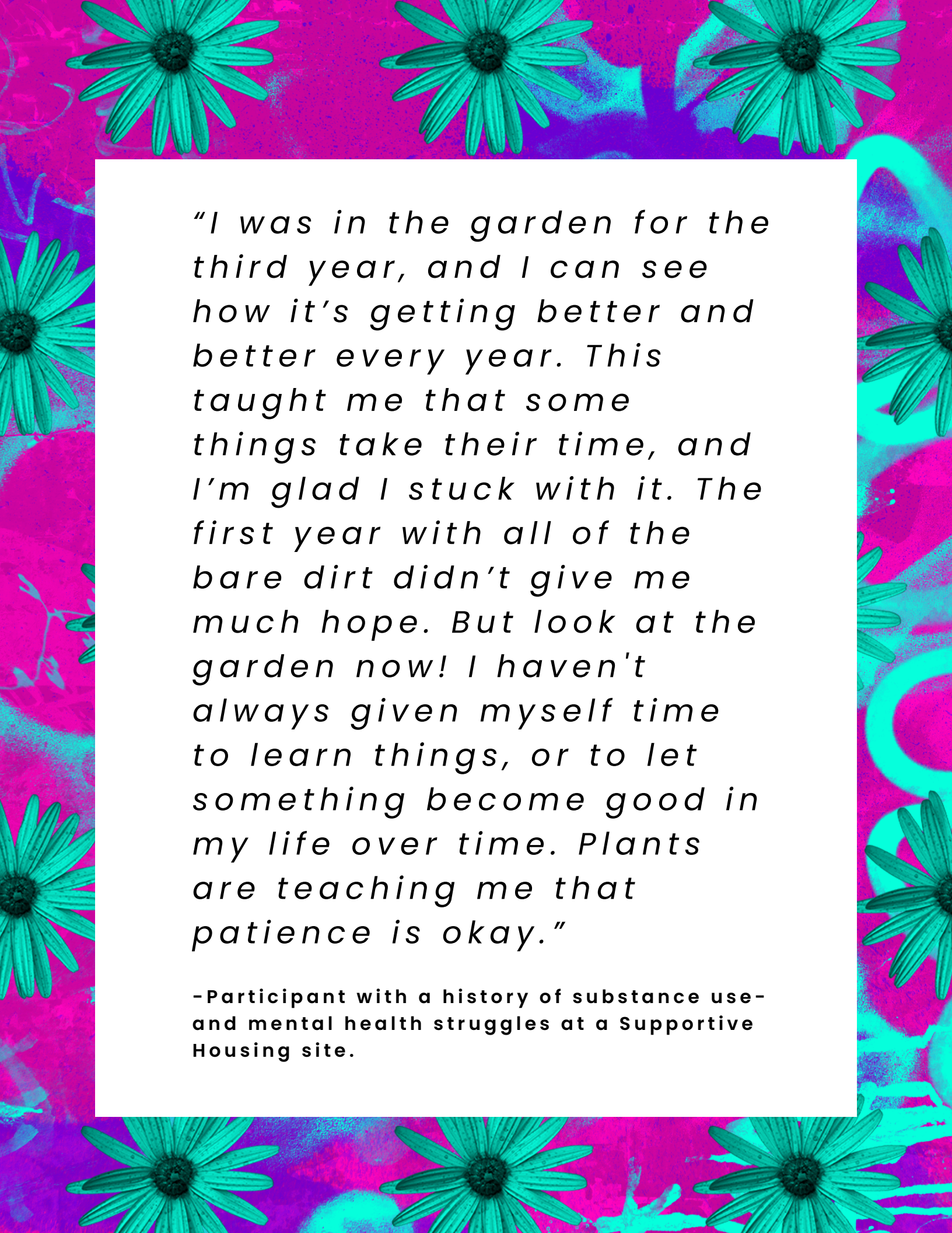
### **Commitment to Underserved Populations**

We launched programs with new partner organizations, extending our workshops to older adults with varying abilities, school-aged children, the LGBTQ+ community, and youth and adults in detention centers or transitioning back into the community. Notably, our partnership with YouthWRAP, in collaboration with the Department of Probation, established a weekend program at the Greenhouse and Education Center, empowering participants to cultivate their connection with plants while contributing to community initiatives.

### **Future Goals and Commitments**

Moving forward, we remain dedicated to forging new community partnerships and expanding our reach to new populations, ensuring that the healing power of plants reaches those who can benefit most. As our programs continue to evolve and grow, we are committed to learning and implementing best practices in therapeutic horticulture, ensuring that our interventions are meaningful, intentional, and yield tangible benefits for all participants.





*"I was in the garden for the third year, and I can see how it's getting better and better every year. This taught me that some things take their time, and I'm glad I stuck with it. The first year with all of the bare dirt didn't give me much hope. But look at the garden now! I haven't always given myself time to learn things, or to let something become good in my life over time. Plants are teaching me that patience is okay."*

**-Participant with a history of substance use-  
and mental health struggles at a Supportive  
Housing site.**





## **THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE BY THE NUMBERS**

**26** New partner sites

**10,000** New Yorkers reached through programming

**3,140** Seedlings raised at Riverbank for programming

**4** Longitudinal studies at partner sites





Our workforce development program, Horticulture and Open Streets Resident Training in NYC (HORTNYC), has made unprecedented strides in empowering New Yorkers for sustainable careers. This year, we expanded our reach, providing invaluable opportunities to individuals while contributing to the preservation and beautification of open spaces across the city.





## **Comprehensive Training and Skill Development**

Trainees engaged in full-time employment, dedicating 40 hours per week to tending to open spaces while honing their horticultural expertise and essential career skills. This year marked significant accomplishments for HORTNYC, with comprehensive trainings covering a broad spectrum of skills, from safety protocols to advanced composting techniques. Additionally, core skills training, including resume writing, interview techniques, and conflict resolution workshops, further equipped trainees for success in their future endeavors.

## **Building Employer Relationships**

With the launch of five cohorts this year, we are actively fostering stronger relationships with potential employers across private, city, and state sectors, providing them with access to a pool of skilled and motivated candidates from our program.

## **Strategic Supervision and Support**

We elevated program supervision by hiring managers with backgrounds in Social Work, ensuring optimal support and guidance for trainees throughout their journey. As a result, over 50% of program graduates secured coveted positions in the green sector, with placements at esteemed institutions like The Central Park Conservancy, underscoring the program's profound impact on participants' career trajectories.

## **Future Program Development**

We are also excited to continue to develop an intensive horticultural trainee program, bridging horticultural teams and Open Streets work, enriching trainees' experiences and easing transitions into both aspects of the position. Our expanded outreach efforts and the establishment of an Alumni Network will help us bolster green career connections.





## **HORTNYC BY THE NUMBERS**

**50%** Placement rate

**9** Partner organizations

**100** Hours of horticulture training

**60%** Retention rate





# PUBLIC SPACE

In the past year, The Hort significantly expanded its impact on public spaces across New York City through a larger contract with the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT). This expanded contract enabled us to serve more public spaces than ever before, including seasonal and year-round Open Streets, public plazas, and bike boulevards.





### **Successful Transition and Onboarding**

With the transition to this new contract, we successfully onboarded multiple new subcontractors, trained staff at new sites, and strengthened our collaborations with community partners. Despite the challenges of this transition period, we effectively built out and expanded our on-the-ground operations, ensuring seamless service delivery across a wider range of public spaces.

### **Enhanced Technical Assistance**

We have formalized and enhanced the technical assistance provided to public space community partners, offering tailored support to help them maximize the impact of their spaces.

### **Growing Horticultural Access**

As a result of our expanded contract and presence in diverse neighborhoods, horticultural access has continued to grow, reaching new communities throughout the city.

### **Establishing Expertise in Public Space Management**

In 2024, The Hort solidified its reputation as an expert in public space management. Our active participation in panels, conferences, and meetings with city agencies has positioned us not only as experts in on-the-ground operations but also as key contributors to conversations about the future direction of public spaces in New York City.





## **PUBLIC SPACE BY THE NUMBERS**

**100** Public Spaces Served

**365** Days of Operation

**109** Total City Blocks

**65,000** Annuals and perennials planted in public plazas and open streets





# URBAN GREENING

In FY24, our Urban Greening team increased the sustainability, beauty, and diversity of both our public and private plantings across New York City.



## Enhancing Sustainability and Diversity

In FY24, our Urban Greening team enhanced the sustainability, beauty, and diversity of public and private plantings across New York City. We prioritized sustainability by trialing perennial plantings citywide, reducing our carbon footprint and promoting carbon sequestration. Many of these plants, native to the region, also benefit pollinators.

## Supporting Pollinators

We are proud participants in the Pollinator Port Project, a collaboration with Rutgers University and the NYC Department of Transportation, focused on creating habitats for native bees in urban areas. These efforts are gradually transforming NYC's urban ecosystem to support pollinators like bees and butterflies.

## Expanding Our Landscape Design Portfolio

Our landscape design portfolio has grown, with notable projects including the installation of tropical plants at The Atrium at Sumner, an affordable housing complex designed by Studio Libeskind in collaboration with NYCHA and Selfhelp. We also redesigned the grounds of a Co-Op building on Central Park West and are working on community-based design projects for parks in Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan.

## Advancing Irrigation Techniques

Additionally, we expanded our watering team's capabilities to include drip irrigation installation and repair, implemented at the Sumner Atrium, Newtown Presbyterian Church, and several supportive housing sites. These enhancements further our commitment to sustainable urban greening.







## **URBAN GREENING BY THE NUMBERS**

**58** Open Streets and Public Plazas received regular horticulture work

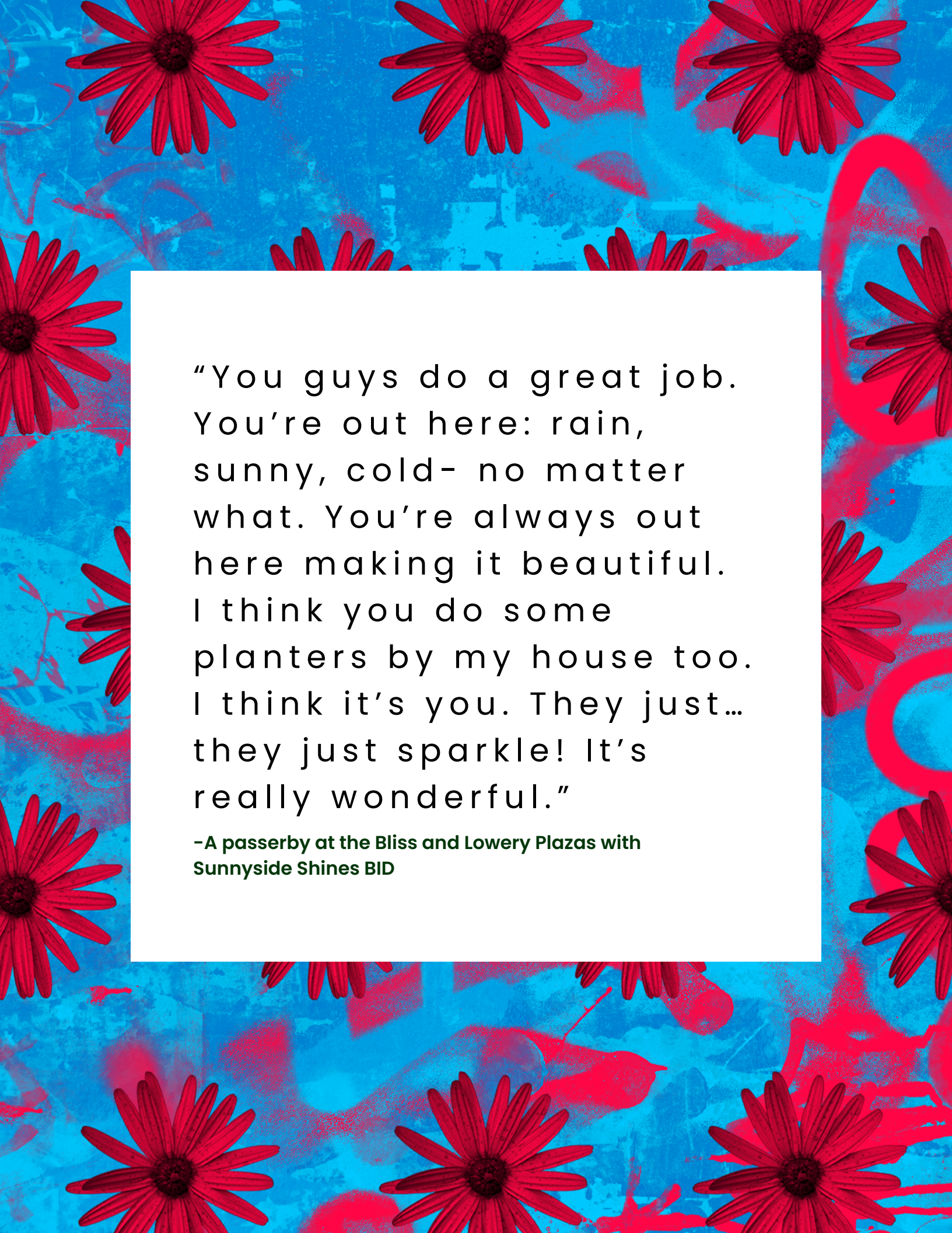
**127** Non-DOT sites served

**300** Plantings in tree pits

**1,300** Seasonal plantings in step planters across the city

**40,000** Bulbs planted at garden sites in all five boroughs





"You guys do a great job.  
You're out here: rain,  
sunny, cold- no matter  
what. You're always out  
here making it beautiful.  
I think you do some  
planters by my house too.  
I think it's you. They just..  
they just sparkle! It's  
really wonderful."

**-A passerby at the Bliss and Lowery Plazas with  
Sunnyside Shines BID**





# FINANCIALS



# Unaudited Financials

FY2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

<b>Revenue</b>	
Earned Income	
Horticulture	\$ 9,395,071
Education	\$ 338,735
Therapeutic Horticulture	\$ 313,595
Other	\$114,589
Contributions	
Government	\$1,454,417
Foundations	\$ 407,700
Individual Contributions	\$ 242,086
Corporations	\$ 38,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 12,304,192</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Programs	\$10,806,162
Fundraising & General	\$ 767,915
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 11,574,077</b>
<i>Net Income</i>	<i>\$ 730,115</i>





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