

## A message from our Founder + Executive Director

Time and again, we are reminded of the power of our partners, donors, supporters, volunteers, and sponsors who make it possible for us to advance local solutions that reduce our impact on the climate, advance racial equity, and improve residents' health and wellness.

In 2023, we helped secure record funding for more parks, greenways, and nature preserves, higher fines for parking on sidewalks and bike paths, and nearly \$50M in the City's budget for projects that support equity and sustainability.

We were able to equip voters with information about where local candidates stand on issues that affect our sustainability, remove more than 2,000 pounds of trash from our local streams, and create an accessibility map of the Mecklenburg County greenway system.

Through the nearly 60 articles we published and the 55 times we were mentioned in the media, we were able to positively inform and influence public opinion.

We are grateful for our community's continued belief in our mission. It's what fuels our passion and propels us forward as we strive to create lasting and meaningful change.

*With gratitude,  
Shannon Binns*

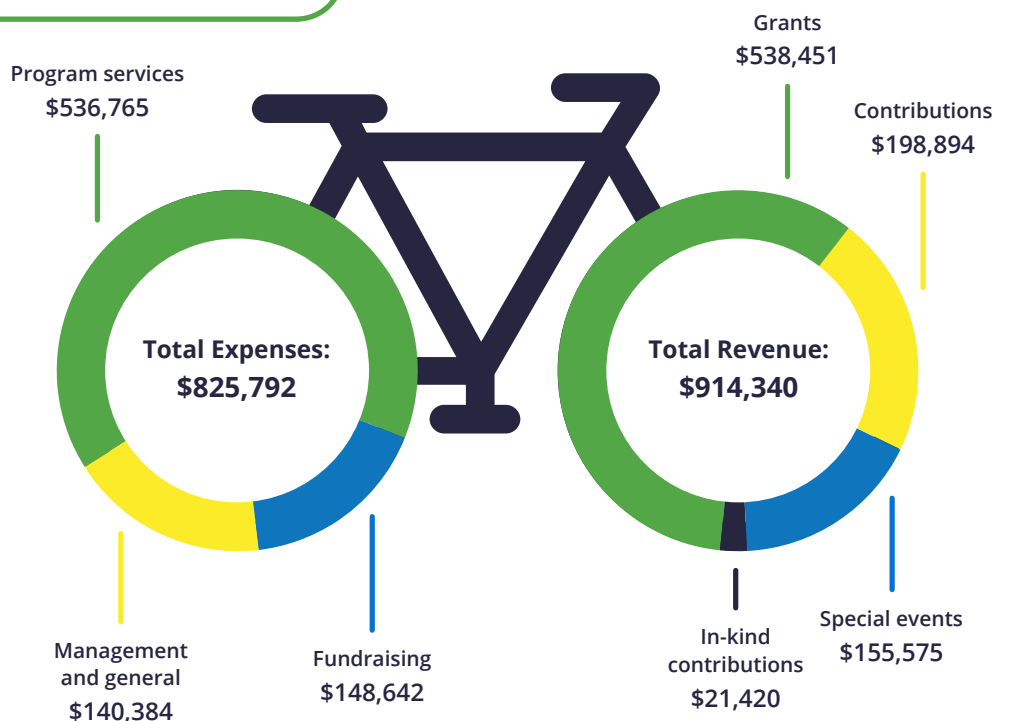
Thought leadership pieces published **59**

Media interviews **55**

Community presentations **36**

Event attendees **4770**

Programs and events **62**





## Helped secure county funding for more parks, greenways, and nature preserves and advocated for investments in underserved neighborhoods

To do this, we organized a public outreach campaign that included seven advocacy events, and made it easy for residents to ask the Mecklenburg County Commission to approve this important funding. More than 200 people attended our advocacy events and more than 100 people contacted their elected officials. County commissioners approved an additional \$50 million to acquire land for future parks, greenways, and nature preserves. The the budget adopted for Park and Recreation to build parks, greenways recreation centers, and nature preserves over the next five years was the largest ever.

## Helped secure additional funding in the City of Charlotte's annual budget that supports equity and sustainability

We spoke at the Charlotte City Council budget hearing and encouraged members of the public to join us in voicing support for funding for projects that provide safe and equitable mobility, create more affordable housing, and reduce Charlotte's greenhouse gas emissions. All of the funds – nearly \$50 million – that we advocated for were included in the approved budget.

## Helped secure the implementation of the Unified Development Ordinance on schedule

In 2022 we played a critical role in Charlotte City Council's adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which are the development regulations that will shape how we grow. These rules were scheduled to take effect on June 1, 2023, yet some Council Members proposed a delay. In response, we urged the Council to move forward with the Unified Development Ordinance implementation as planned. Our voice made a difference and the UDO went into effect on June 1.





## Helped secure a higher fine for parking on sidewalks, bike paths, and streetcar right-of-ways, loading zones, and electric vehicle spaces

We presented a letter signed by more than 300 residents to Charlotte City Council asking that they increase the fine from \$25 to \$100 and they did so unanimously.

## Mapped the Mecklenburg County greenway system

This interactive digital map, a joint effort with AARP Carolinas, includes accessibility features like ramps, benches, and water fountains to make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to use and enjoy our greenway network. Residents and visitors can now use this valuable resource, which will be updated regularly, to help them plan their greenway outings.



*“ Serving as a volunteer in this organization is worth every minute to me. The mission of Sustain Charlotte is something I believe in and fits well with my personal goals. ”*

**-Stephen Moore**





## **Equipped local voters with a comprehensive voter guide about where candidates running for local office stand on issues that affect our sustainability**

We sent surveys to all candidates for Charlotte City Council, Charlotte Mayor, and the Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board with questions on local climate action, mobility, transportation choices, planning and development, green space, land use, food security, and our tree canopy. We then published their answers in a voter guide and widely distributed.

## **Informed residents about important sustainability issues and how they can make a difference**

We published 59 articles about news that impacts our sustainability and shared our expertise, such as the Red Line rail project; Charlotte's bikeability ratings; the climate crisis and what residents can do at a local level to mitigate it; city and county policy and budget discussions, and much more.

## **Engaged and inspired residents through our Impact 704 Academy**

More than 120 residents learned about sustainable, equitable, and resilient urban development in the Charlotte area and how to advocate for themselves and their communities. Our 2023 series consisted of three sessions, each of which included a presentation from speakers representing the City of Charlotte, educational institutions, nonprofits, and the private sector.





“ As an avid cyclist, I appreciate Sustain Charlotte’s advocacy to expand our greenways. This initiative encourages me to get on my bicycle and enjoy the outdoors, plus it allows residents to get to and from adjoining neighborhoods in a fun and safe manner. It really is a game changer! ”

- **Jeanie Koechley**

## Hosted Biketoberfest to Inspire more than 550 residents

to visit 34 businesses and nonprofits, and discover multiple parks and greenways between South End and NoDa on foot or bicycle. After the event, many participants say they are more likely to bike or walk for transportation and commit to join us in advocating for more greenways and safer streets to help them – and others – walk and ride more.

## Recognized and celebrated the remarkable sustainability work happening in and around the Charlotte area at our 11th Annual Sustain Charlotte Awards

This year’s event highlighted the work of more than 50 nominees in seven categories and attracted 300 attendees including Mayor Lyles and six more local elected officials.







## Influenced public opinion on important issues that affect our sustainability

We were interviewed 55 times by reporters from dozens of local media outlets seeking our expert perspective and recommendations on a range of local issues. These include The Associated Press, Axios, Charlotte Business Journal, Charlotte Observer, WBTV, WCNC, WSOC-TV, WFAE, and more.

## Removed an estimated 2000 pounds of trash from our local streams

We organized and hosted four greenway walks and three stream cleans that engaged more than 130 volunteers to help care for our local waterways and green spaces.



*“ Having lived in a large city with plentiful public transit, walking and biking options, I’ve seen the quality of life and economic benefits of sustainable urban development. Sustain Charlotte’s mission will enhance Charlotte’s efforts to improve housing affordability, mobility, quality of life and carbon output. ”*

**- Jahan Mohiuddin**

## Additional Work with Community Partners

- Held two Ambassador training sessions for members of the community interested in learning more about our advocacy efforts and how we go about our work.
- Hosted a panel discussion for city planning leaders to share information about the Unified Development Ordinance and how residents can participate in shaping how our community grows.
- Hosted an Environmental Justice Framework input session and encouraged supporters to participate in the public input phase of this piece of Mecklenburg County's Environmental Leadership Action Plan.
- Held a community discussion about the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission to educate residents about the commission's work, its relevance to sustainability, and how community members can get involved.
- Led a free after-work bike ride tour of future segments of the Uptown Cycle Link during BIKE Charlotte's Bike Week and encouraged supporters to take the opportunity to ride their bike to work.
- Recruited and coordinated volunteers to survey the tree canopy in a southwest Charlotte neighborhood.
- Supported Charlotte's Vision Zero initiative by compiling a list of safer street design elements and continued advocating for increasing investments in safer street design and better enforcement of traffic laws to stem the rising tide of serious traffic injuries and deaths.
- Convened and revitalized the Charlotte Regional Transportation Coalition to engage community organizations and members of the public in transportation advocacy.
- Co-hosted a greenway walk with Charlotte-based My Outdoor Joy to introduce neighbors to the benefits of the greenway network.
- Participated in five panel discussions held by community partners about the need for transportation choices, housing affordability and access, and smart growth.
- Joined local, state, and national partners in advocating for:
  - Congressional leaders to fulfill their commitment to programs that make transit more affordable and accessible, North Carolina's Draft Carbon Reduction Strategy to include a timeline and detailed implementation plan,
  - U.S House representatives to oppose a bill that proposed cutting transit capital investment grants by 82 percent and eliminating the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program, and
  - Legalizing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) statewide.

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Founder + Executive Director