



BUILDING ROOTS

Impact Report 2025



A photograph of a raised garden bed with green leafy plants and a wicker basket. The garden bed is made of dark wood and is filled with soil and various green plants. A wicker basket is visible on the right side of the frame. The background is a white wall with a large, stylized cutout shape that frames the text.

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Land Acknowledgement

Inspired by the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Addresses, we aim to embrace the full intention behind land acknowledgements, recognizing all of creation. Our acknowledgement states we are on Treaty 13 land with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, home to the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This land has sustained life for millions of years, providing water, flora, and fauna, teaching us how to live with the seasons.

We express gratitude to the First People of this land and their sacred teachings. We honour the wisdom of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat peoples, whose cultures reflect a deep relationship with "all our relations." We are committed to learning from and celebrating the land-based knowledge of all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

We pledge to transform our role from ally to accomplice, acknowledging our privileges and using them to challenge colonial and racial injustices. Our commitments include formal learning, fostering informal connections, and collaborating meaningfully with Indigenous organizations and communities.

Our land acknowledgment will continue to evolve as our commitments deepen. We encourage everyone to join us on this journey of healing the land and our relationships.





2025 by the Numbers

A SNAPSHOT OF SCALE, CONNECTION, AND CARE IN MOSS PARK

~190,000 lbs
of food
distributed

800+
weekly reach

15,000+
meals and snacks
shared

FOOD ACCESS

53
weekly home
delivery
households

30%
direct food
costs covered
by GWYC
community
donations

273
new market
members

COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

2,785
volunteer hours

13
peer-led
workshops

200+
garden
participants

CARE & SUPPORT

600+
resources shared

400+
one on one
supports

693
harm reduction
kits provided

3,000+
books shared

My family can eat healthy food because of this market. It is a real blessing for the community. – Market Member

Message from our Executive Director and Board Chair

This past year was defined by connection; neighbours showing up for one another in meaningful ways across Moss Park.

In 2025, Building Roots distributed approximately 190,000 pounds of fresh food and supported hundreds of residents each week through our Moss Park Market and delivery programs. The Moss Park Community Garden harvested more than 450 pounds of produce in its first full year of growing, and hundreds of residents participated in workshops, peer programming, and volunteer opportunities. These numbers reflect both need and collective effort.

Our Give-What-You-Can market is designed to centre dignity, autonomy, and mutual aid. There is no set price and no obligation to contribute financially; community members give what they can, whether that is a few dollars, time, skills, or consistent participation. In 2025, those contributions covered 30% of direct produce costs, demonstrating shared investment in keeping the market sustainable and the care community members have for one another.

The garden continued to grow as a vibrant neighbourhood green space. Residents selected culturally meaningful crops, led workshops, and helped care for the land. In a neighbourhood where green space is limited, it has become both a source of fresh food and a place to gather and build relationships.

Our Community Leader program also expanded this year. Through training and peer facilitation, residents shaped programming and strengthened the responsiveness of our work, ensuring it remains grounded in lived experience.

Beyond our programs, Building Roots was invited to lead the creation of the Downtown East Food Resiliency Network, bringing together more than 30 organizations to build a more coordinated food system with the shared goal of supporting more people effectively and sustainably.

This work is community-driven and is sustained by residents, staff, volunteers, Board members, and partners who contribute their time, care, funds and commitment to Moss Park.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who helped shape, sustain, and strengthen the Moss Park community in 2025.



Caroline Clair
Executive Director



Monique Kavanagh
Board Chair

Moss Park Market

Each week, neighbours gather at the market, choose fresh food, enjoy a meal or snack, and sit down for a chat with neighbours.

The market is built around a Give-What-You-Can model, where community members contribute what they are able. This helps build towards the long-term sustainability of the market, while reinforcing a shared sense of ownership and care for all members of the market. In 2025, 30% of our direct food purchasing costs were covered from community donations.



“Fresh produce is too expensive in the grocery store. Very thankful for fresh, quality food at the Market.” – Market Member

We remain committed to bringing high-quality, fresh produce into Moss Park in a way that is deeply affordable and accessible, while prioritizing food access, relationship building, and neighbourhood connection

“[The market] gives our family food for the week. We would not have fresh food otherwise. Just a bag of onions at the store is \$8 and here you get all you need.” – Market Member

Whenever possible, food is purchased locally. Throughout the year, this has include onions, beets, carrots, and potatoes in the colder months and in the summer months, locally grown corn, green beans, lettuce, tomatoes, fresh herbs, bell peppers, okra and more.

In 2025, we also partnered with Broadfork to purchase from small-scale local farmers, helping to diversify and strengthen local agriculture. For the first time, we were proud to offer hyper-local produce grown in our own community garden at the market table. Looking ahead, building stronger relationships with small-scale farmers remains a key priority. By supporting local growers, we contribute to a more resilient food system and help strengthen connections between urban and rural communities.



Coffee and Conversations

This program has grown into a vibrant, community-powered part of the weekly market.

What began as simple snacks and hot drinks has evolved into a shared effort, with meals and baked goods contributed by neighbours, thousands of sandwiches through our partnership with Club Sandwich, and fresh meals prepared regularly by St. Luke's United Church. More than 15,000 meals and snacks were shared in 2025.

For many, this space offers immediate access to food alongside a place to sit, connect, and spend time together. During the warmer months, tables and seating create an open, café-style environment where people can gather, eat, and talk.

Many folks don't have reliable, consistent access to nutritious food. For those needing additional food support, we also provide take-away options such as nutritionally dense dehydrated meals, made possible through Provisions by Valerie, so people have something they can rely on later.



You helped my health,
I got my appetite
back. You take care of
me and don't judge
me. You talk to me.
– Community Member



Food Delivery

Our weekly food delivery program continues to ensure that neighbours who are unable to leave their homes remain connected to fresh food and community.

With the support of a dedicated volunteer team, 53 households in nearby TCHC buildings receive food deliveries each week. For many, barriers related to mobility, health, or isolation make it difficult to access the market in person.

This program helps bridge that gap, bringing not only fresh food, but a consistent point of connection, ensuring they remain part of the broader community.



Downtown East Project

In 2025, we were asked to lead a new, ambitious initiative to strengthen collaboration among food security organizations across the Downtown East.

Led by our Manager, Community Food Programs, this work brought together 36 nonprofit organizations through roundtables and shared conversations. Together, we explored common challenges, identified gaps, and began shaping a more coordinated approach to food access.

This work reflects a growing understanding that no single organization can meet the level of need alone. By working together, we can better support community members and strengthen connections across the Downtown East.

In 2026, we will continue this work alongside our nonprofit neighbours, building stronger relationships and taking collective steps toward a more connected and responsive system of support.



ABC

NO ALCOHOL
CONSUMPTION IN
THIS AREA

VOR EC AUTOMOTIV

SKYGRID

Our Community

Moss Park is a blend of neighbours who have lived here for decades, newcomers building new lives, families, elders, and people from all walks of life who gather here each week.

What brings people together at Building Roots is often food. What keeps people coming back is something deeper.

Each week, you'll find neighbours walking through the market, sharing a meal, or stopping by to connect. Over time, familiar faces become part of the rhythm of the week.



“Anytime I come here, I feel like I’m going to my family.” Khalid, Community Member

For some, it’s a place to give back and find purpose.

“Volunteering here has given me a strong connection with the community... I always look forward to coming every Saturday.” Maisha, Volunteer + Community Member

For others, it’s about connection—something as simple and meaningful as being seen.

“This place is like therapy for me. I can come here, talk about what I’m going through, and people care.” Community Member

Across generations, relationships form in small, consistent ways, through conversation, shared meals, and showing up week after week.

What exists here isn’t just access to food, it’s a sense of belonging, shaped by the people who gather and make it their own.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Our Volunteers

Our volunteers bring their hearts to this work ...



This year they have contributed **2,785** hours working in the following ways:

- Food Bag packing and delivery
- Doing community membership intake
- Organizing produce at the market and tending the checkout line
- Community Outreach
- Serving coffee at Coffee & Conversation
- Planting and harvesting the garden



Workshops led by them!

Community members and community leaders have led **13** workshop sessions this year.

This is what they were about:



- 6 Toddler Sing-a-longs by Amanda
- The Wisdom of Sage by Francesca
- Garden Arts and Crafts for Families by Kaya
- Learning Lavender by Tatiana
- Self Care by Buthiana
- Employment Service Support by Anthony
- Young Mom Peer Support by Savannah
- Radical Care Focused on Autonomy by Al

The Garden

276 hours were spent harvesting, planting, and enjoying the garden

451 lbs of produce was harvested

48 different kinds of herbs, fruits, and vegetables grown and enjoyed

12 different pollinator species were spotted, such as the brown belted bumblebee



Their Comments

"I love Moss Park and I love everyone in Moss Park, even when it's hard."

- A

"I think most of us who came to the garden became closer and learned more about each other. We're neighbours and more, now

-Community Member

"I haven't been to the space in years and it's so great to be down here now, It's really community centered and feels really good. I love the vibe!"

- Volunteer

Their Donations

- Volunteers Pooja and Anthony have donated dahl, samosas, and rice.
- Mohib, our community neighbour, has donated **92** pizzas and chicken and rice.
- Sadaf, our community friend; donated **165** sandwiches + back-to-school giveaway items.
- Brian, our community friend, has donated **182** sandwiches, juice, granola, and soup cups.



So far this year, their donations have covered **30%** of the cost of food at the market!

They feed us, they bring us joy and tears, they bring us kindness and hugs, they fix our doors and our ramps. Thank you for caring about us and supporting us in return.



MOSS PARK
**Community
Garden**



Moss Park Community Garden

2025 was a year of growth, learning, and connection at the Moss Park Community Garden. With the new garden space entering its first full growing season, we put into action lessons we learned from experimenting with different crops and techniques. Led by Garden Coordinator Wayne and supported by a committed team of volunteers, the garden produced over 450 pounds of fresh produce for the community.

This year, we also strengthened community engagement by hosting workshops, drop-ins, children's programming, and casual visits. Over the course of the summer, we had well over 200 engagements with the garden.

Support from our funders allowed us to focus on culturally relevant crops and hands-on learning. We grew over 45 different crops, including callaloo, Thai chili, Chinese celery, Malabar spinach, and bitter melon. All produce was shared between volunteers and the Moss Park Market at no cost.

The garden also hosted peer-led workshops ranging from lavender-based self-care to toddler sing-alongs. Garden Coordinator, Em led five pollinator-focused sessions for children and families, helping bring more nature-based learning into the space.

In 2026, we look forward to continuing to fine-tune the timing and content of the garden programming offerings, making sure that the garden is as accessible as possible. We will also continue to experiment with methods to weather the changes in climate we are seeing and the challenges that our squirrel neighbours pose. Next year promises to be even more nourishing and flourishing at the Moss Park Community Garden than this one was.

WHAT WE GREW IN 2025:

- Arugula
- Basil
- Bitter Melon
- Cabbage
- Callaloo
- Carrots
- Celery
- Chervil
- Chives
- Choi
- Cilantro
- Cuban Oregano
- Cucumber
- Dill
- Eggplant
- Fennel
- Garlic Scapes
- Green beans
- Green onions
- Ground Cherries
- Hot peppers
- Kale
- Lemon Balm
- Lemon Thyme
- Lemongrass
- Lettuce
- Malabar spinach
- Mint
- Napa Cabbage
- Okra
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Pole beans
- Radish
- Rosemary
- Russian Tarragon
- Sage
- Snow Peas
- Spinach
- Sunflower seeds
- Swiss chard
- Thyme
- Tomatillo
- Tomato
- Tulsi
- Winter Garlic
- Zucchini



Community Engagement

2025 was a year of deepening relationships, consistency, and care in our community engagement work. Rather than approaching engagement as a series of one-time interactions, we continued to show up with a sustained, community-centered presence.



CONNECTIONS

Our approach resulted in over 400 meaningful engagements, where relationship building remained at the core. These connections not only supported immediate needs, but also created pathways for ongoing engagement, improved access to resources, and deeper community impact over time.



RESOURCE-SHARING

Resource sharing was embedded across all interactions, with over 600 resources distributed throughout the year. This included referrals, employment supports, and direct connections to partner organizations. A significant focus of our work was system navigation, supporting community members in accessing healthcare, housing, social services, and legal or administrative systems. Drawing from lived experience, our staff and volunteers worked alongside community members to reduce barriers, build understanding, and create more accessible pathways to support.



HARM REDUCTION

Central to all initiatives was a harm reduction framework, prioritizing safety, dignity, and autonomy. The program itself has transformed immensely through partnerships with Toronto Public Health, and our community leader, AI. Community members are able to access the materials they need for safer use, while building consistent relationships with one another and our staff – this ensures ongoing informal check-ins, responsive support, and concise feedback loops for communities.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are central to our approach. With partners like Mindsilike, we supported an accessible mental health walk-in clinic that offered counselling services. In collaboration with H2H, a mobile team provides de-escalation support, relationship-building, and frontline staff wellbeing. Through the Moss Park Coalition, our space has hosted neighbourhood revitalization consultations. Together with the Children's Book Bank, we distributed over 3,000 books this year, many to support community members learning English.

Community Leaders

In 2025, this program was guided by the theme of “People, Land, and Food”. The program focused on strengthening relationships between community members and the ecosystems that sustain them. Through weekly shared meals, workshops, and local field trips, participants and staff gathered regularly to build skills, exchange knowledge, and engage in meaningful dialogue. These sessions centered on food systems, land stewardship, urban agriculture, and collective care, creating an environment where learning was both hands-on and community-driven.

Throughout the program, we emphasized accessible and experiential learning grounded in both theory and practice. Participants explored topics such as food sovereignty, land acknowledgement, and peer leadership, while developing a stronger sense of accountability to one another and the land. This approach supported not only individual growth, but also a deeper sense of community connection and shared responsibility.

A key focus of the program was supporting emerging community leaders to design and lead their own workshops or initiatives. To prepare for this, participants received training in peer-led skill areas including harm reduction, de-escalation, food handling, and community engagement. Ongoing mentorship was central to this process, with weekly check-ins providing space for reflection, accountability, and continued development. Peer learning was also woven throughout the program, reinforcing the value of lived experience and collective knowledge. Participants have gone on to lead initiatives within the community, strengthening local networks of care and leadership. Most recently, community leader Al expanded the Harm Reduction Program, and Anthony began coordinating a food-based program for elders in Moss Park. These outcomes reflect a growing shift toward community-led support systems, where neighbours are increasingly able to rely on one another.



Volunteers

Our work is only possible because of our volunteers. We have said that time and time again but they are truly the only way we can continue to stay consistent to the community. These are some of the ways our volunteers went far beyond supporting programs:

Krissy has shown extraordinary courage and care in her volunteer role, stepping in during critical moments and helping to save lives through on-the-spot overdose response.

Alaadin and Maisha have transformed our Coffee and Conversations gatherings into a weekly dance party, bringing energy, movement, and connection into the room.

Morteza has become an essential presence in our space — a true go-to for anything that needs fixing, building, or problem-solving. From repairing and maintaining the space to catering our Eid celebrations and regularly bringing in homemade food for staff and volunteers, his generosity is felt across the entire community.

Through Francie, we were connected to the music festival “Midchella,” which selected us as their nonprofit partner and raised funds in support of our work — a meaningful example of community extending beyond our walls.

Our volunteer Wahidullah, alongside his son Touhid, travels weekly from Hamilton to be part of this work.

Pooja and Anthony have made countless homemade meals and treats for community members.

The Friday Delivery Team continues to be the backbone of our Food Delivery program. Volunteers Lindsey and Mallorie show up each week not only to deliver food, but to check in on community members and ensure their wellbeing. They keep their fingers on the pulse of the community — often the first to let us know if someone has been hospitalized or displaced.

We are also proud to share that volunteer Claire Shiply has stepped into a new role on our Board, continuing her commitment to the organization in a new capacity.

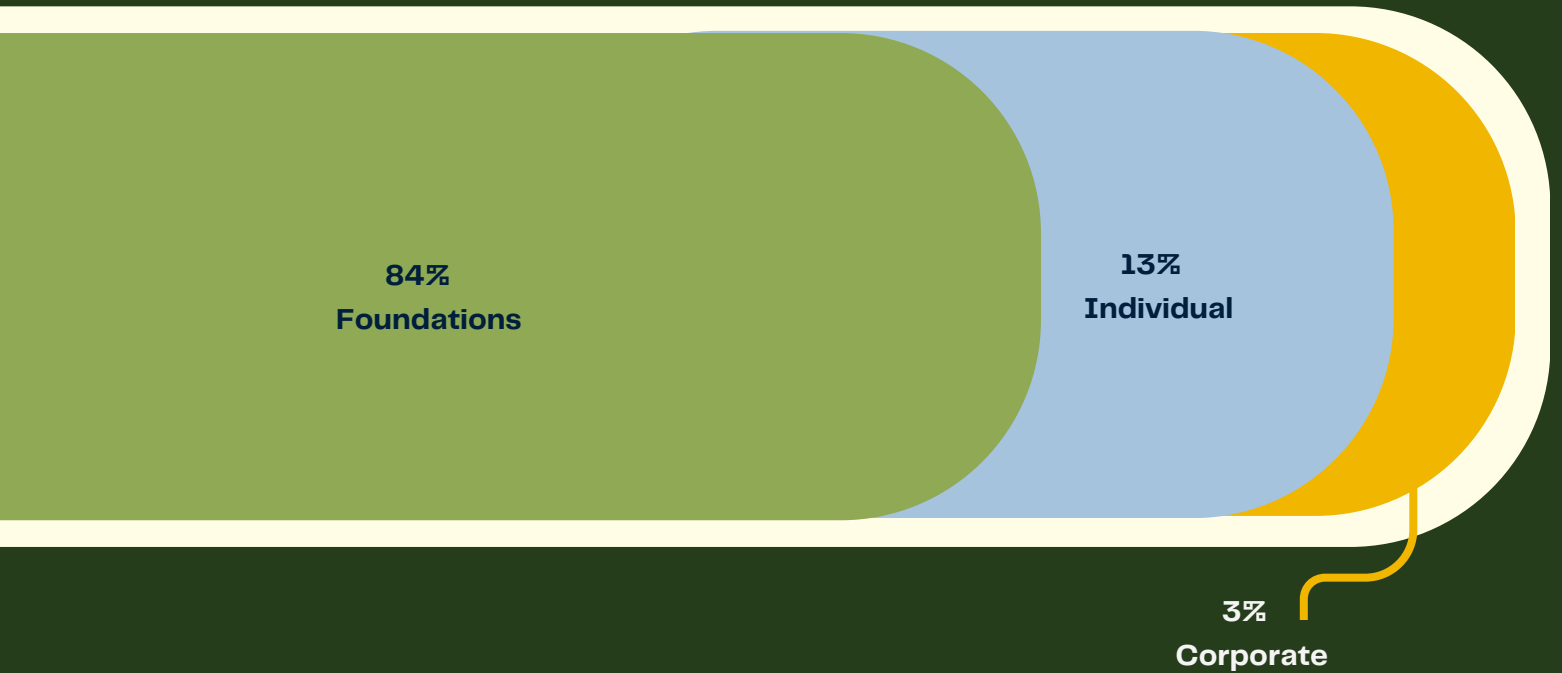
Our Volunteer Julie, has learned to greet community members in almost every language spoken in Moss Park, and continues to expand her vocabulary every week.

Anthony contributed an incredible 377 volunteer hours this year.

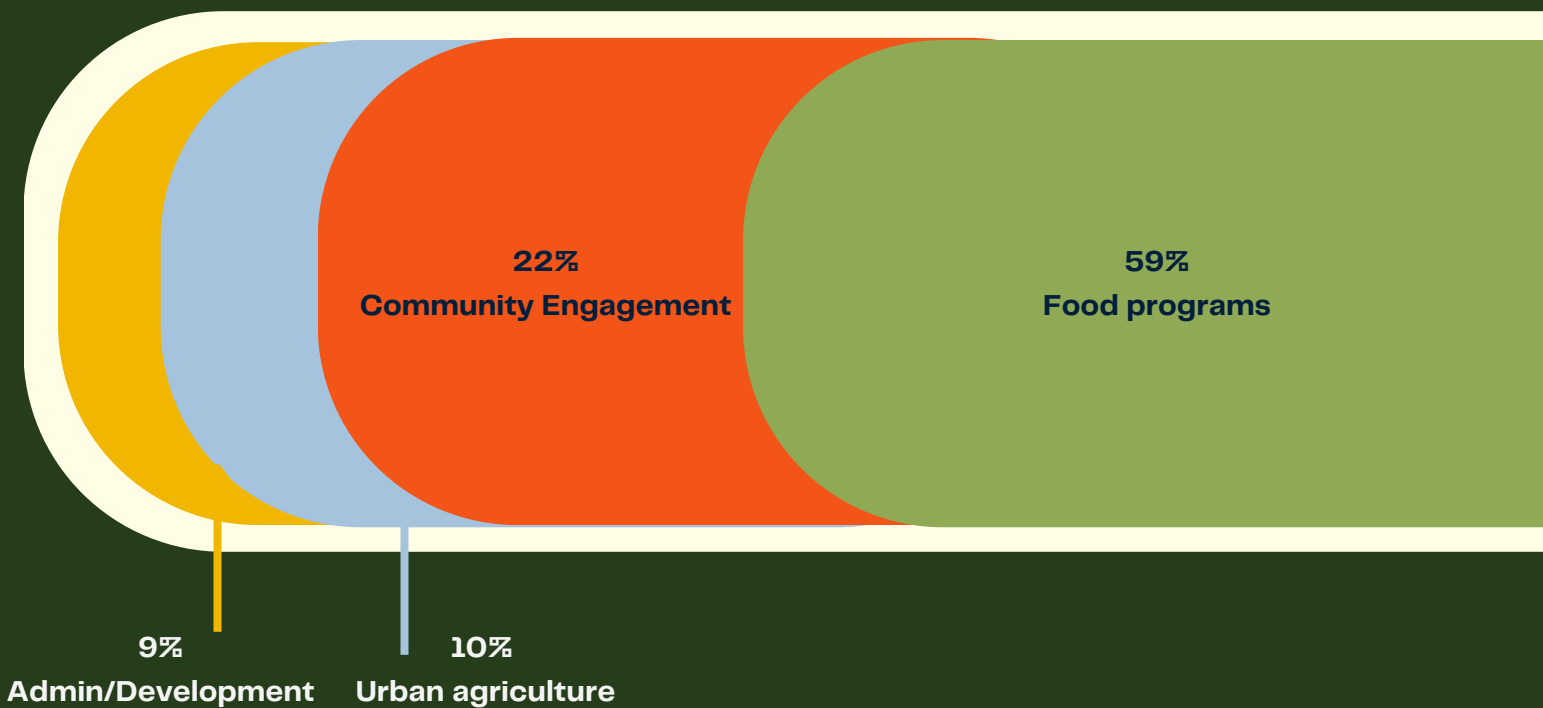
Across all of this, our volunteers continue to shape the culture of our space. They come from all over the world, representing diverse cultures, languages, and lived experiences. Through them, our community is constantly learning — sharing food, music, traditions, and ways of being. Their presence not only makes our programs possible, it makes them richer, more inclusive, and more alive.

Financials 2025

Revenue



Expenditure



Our Supporters and Partners

the
SPROTT
FOUNDATION

BALSAM FOUNDATION



Fondation **ECHO** Foundation

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Community
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CDW, Community Matters, Bradley James Personal Real Estate Corporation, Decoy Bar, Elephant Shoes Foundation, KPMB Architects, Market City TO, McClean Smiths Foundation, Nicola Wealth, Ontario REALTORS Care® Foundation, Raw Signal Group, Right to Food, Royal Bank of Canada, School Editing, Smith Share Foundation, Sony Music, TD Friends of the Environment

Special thanks to our inkind donors and partners

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We thank our individual donors, especially community members whose contributions supported shared access to the market within their community.

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**- BUILDING ROOTS
TEAM 2025**

