

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



*Solutions for Healthy Streams
and Communities*

EXECUTIVE LETTER



OUR MISSION

Howard EcoWorks empowers communities and diverse workforces to respect and restore our natural systems for future generations.

OUR VISION

Innovative solutions, partnerships, and a skilled workforce supporting resilient communities.

TURNING LEMONS INTO LEMONADE

Dear Friends,

Unanticipated. Unexpected. Uncertain. 2020 was a year like no other. After the initial shock, Howard EcoWorks thought long and hard, regrouped, and changed our business model to that of a social enterprise. Turning hardships into opportunities for growth, we launched several new lines of business – Rent-An-EcoCrew, Consultations, EcoCrew, EcoBuild – and we re-vamped our Seeds of Change Nursery operation. We shifted pricing structures, increased our marketing efforts, and updated our website to take bookings and payments. Creating that online storefront allowed us to accept donations and obtain business from our existing circle of supporters, and then helped us expand our reach to develop new clients who purchased our services, supporting our programs and operations.

We are thankful for all those who enabled us to achieve so much during a challenging year. This year, we learned that even with a strategic plan in place, circumstances can shift, and the unexpected can happen. This year also demonstrated Howard EcoWorks' resilience. With perseverance, challenges can become transformative. With an ever-changing climate, we need to continue this important work: building community, empowering individuals, and restoring ecosystems. Green jobs – and environmental restoration – are needed now more than ever. There is so much more work to do, but together we can build a brighter future! We hope you will join us!

See you out there!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori Lilly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Lori Lilly
Executive Director



EcoWorks continued a partnership with Howard Hughes Corporation and Blossoms of Hope to plant 100 trees around the Merriweather District in Downtown Columbia.

HOWARD ECOWORKS 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS **AT-A-GLANCE**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Employed 10 participants in our **Ready** and **UpLift** workforce programming, including those from underserved communities and first-time job applicants
- Piloted a new **Gateway to Green Jobs** program with 8 program participants
- Delivered 15 Chesapeake Bay Landscaping Professional-Associate certificates
- Offered 20 professional development opportunities including Geographic Information System training, tree care, social marketing, biological monitoring, water quality monitoring, first aid, conversations with industry representatives, employer partner site visits, financial literacy, and soft skills



“Nonprofits continually struggle to survive particularly in times of economic hardships. This past year was certainly no exception. EcoWorks not only survived but prospered in large part due to developing new lines of business while maintaining its core mission. Adaptability, perseverance, motivation and focus keep us relevant to the communities we serve.”

— Dick Hesse,
Board Co-Chair

ENVIRONMENT

- Worked with 45 landowners and communities on stormwater remediation and habitat enhancement projects
- Planted 452 trees and 5,890 native perennial plants
- Installed 7,730 square feet and revitalized 6,681 square feet of rain gardens
- Removed 4,760 lbs of debris from our local waterways
- Gave away 500 native trees and found creative ways to partner with local businesses to get the trees out in the community. Those partnerships included: Park Ridge Creamery, Phoenix Upper Main, Allview Neighborhood, Howard County Fire and Rescue Station 13, Catonsville Coop, Community Ecology Institute, and Nonprofit Collaborative

LEADERSHIP AND OUTREACH

- Reached more than 1,000 local residents with messaging and demonstration (word of mouth, signs, workshops, and webinars) on stormwater, stewardship, and natural resource protection
- Featured on a nationally televised Gordon Ramsay production in Old Ellicott City
- Received a Green Community Leadership Award from the Department of Public Works for the **Tree HoCo** program
- Led an Alternative Alternative (Alt2) Spring Break for the community during the pandemic to get volunteers from local high schools to do community service around their neighborhoods
- Launched the Ellicott City **Adopt-A-Drain** program



2020 PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

COVID-19 impacted all of us, from how people work to how we conduct our daily lives. As the world faced uncertainty, hardships, pivots, and challenges, our primary focus remained on the health and safety of our teams, customers, and partners. Landscaping was deemed “essential,” so we were able to continue operations. As stewards of the environment, we are fortunate that the majority of our work is outside where social distancing is easier. We still had to learn how to adapt and shift the business due to loss of revenue. The pandemic helped us tap into our creative reserves and develop new ways to be of service. We are immensely proud of the resilience, flexibility, and professionalism of our employees, who have stayed focused on delivering for customers and partners during this time.

With COVID relief funds, we were able to purchase a much-needed second truck as well as several new laptops for the business, and kept very busy, launching new lines of business.

RENT-AN-ECOCREW

The EcoCrew business idea came from a friend who said, “I want to support your crews and your program. Can I hire them to come out and help my mom with some yard work?” After we shared the results of this project on social media, **Rent-An-EcoCrew** was born. From that small idea, we found 60 jobs in our region to implement while being masked, safe, and socially distant. The EcoCrew service provides a labor source with our sustainably trained crew to do non-design yard and landscaping tasks around a person’s property. A flat fee gets two trained Crew Members with their own set of tools for four hours. We have found a niche for this service with older adults, working parents and singles, and those who didn’t have the time, energy or know-how to get their yards and gardens back in shape.





VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS...THAT LED TO ADDITIONAL WORK

So many people were finding themselves with time on their hands. Many felt ready to tackle yardwork and yard projects that they may have neglected. That's where we came in. We wanted to be able to generate projects that would support our crew among a new client base – single-family homeowners. So we launched a **virtual consultation service** in May where clients could book a virtual consultation with our landscape designer through our website, where payment and booking occurred simultaneously. Our Landscape Designer would meet with the clients, review their properties and make recommendations on how to address drainage and erosion issues, plant selections, plant and tree care, and more. The consultation service became very popular and by the end of the year, we added in-person consultations and had converted 14 percent of those into either EcoCrew, EcoDesign and/or EcoBuild jobs that support our programs.

“The program helps not only with getting better results in work but getting ahead in life and dealing with personal issues and goals.”

— Seeds of Change inmate participant

A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

In 2016, EcoWorks established an on-site native plant nursery operation where inmates can learn about nursery operation and plant propagation. This year, we changed the business model of **Seeds of Change** to that of a social enterprise. We expanded the nursery operation and made changes to our accounting system to now sell the plants for our own EcoBuild projects, as well as to sell plants retail at plant sales or via our new online storefront, where clients can purchase plants throughout the year.

RAIN BARREL INSTALLATION & ADOPT-A-DRAIN

EcoWorks is now offers **rain barrel installation service**. With every rain barrel installation, we take an extra step toward protecting the environment. Rain barrels have become an increasingly popular method of capturing and reusing rainwater that is both ecologically friendly and economically beneficial.

We also launched a new **Adopt-A-Drain** program for volunteers. We recruited volunteers from social media and send them a notice before or after a storm to check their drain. We give them tools and supplies they need to clean, clear and maintain the drain.

NEW GRANTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Through a Business Interruption Grant from Howard County Government, we launched a pilot **Gateway to Green Jobs** program. We recruited participants from those displaced from their jobs due to the coronavirus for a 30-hour, paid training program to introduce them to opportunities in the environmental industry. Participants received a Chesapeake Bay Landscaping Professional-Associate certificate and were provided with broad exposure to different employment opportunities and companies.

MAKING SUBURBAN LANDS, WORKING LANDS

Under a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, we launched a campaign called **Making Suburban Lands, Working Lands**, an extension of **Tree HoCo**, that had a goal of converting lawns into functional ecological landscapes that can support people and wildlife with food. Howard EcoWorks partnered with another nonprofit called SilvoCulture to design and install unique guild and swale systems that can manage runoff while also supporting humans and wildlife through diverse native and edible plantings.



“I sincerely appreciate the effort that you have taken to organize, plan, and coordinate the service project on behalf of my family. The team’s work ethic, courtesy, and positive energy were definite gifts. I am grateful for those who advance efforts to transition to more sustainable and resilient lifestyles and communities. Howard EcoWorks has definitely blessed my life this year. In a year of new challenges, EcoWorks has provided a bright spot.”

— West Friendship resident in Dec, 2020

SOAK IT UP

We completed our 2.5 year, \$155k, **Ellicott City Soak It Up** campaign funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. That grant opportunity allowed us to have a sustained and significant presence in Ellicott City for community engagement, project implementation and research. Under that grant, we collaborated with the University of Delaware on a research project to examine the runoff reduction potential of biochar, a charcoal soil amendment.

- Approximately 30 site visits were conducted with projects installed at 16 sites.
- The projects, which encompassed 16,500 sf of various practices, reduced 3,159 pounds of total suspended solids reduced, eight pounds of total nitrogen and one pound of total phosphorus.
- The research documented an increase in stormwater infiltration of over 200 percent at one of our test sites.

This project gave us momentum and presence in Ellicott City that will continue beyond the grant. EcoWorks leads grassroots community restoration efforts in the watershed – a proof point was our leadership in the **Gordon Ramsay production, 24 HOURS TO HELL AND BACK: SAVE OUR TOWN**, which was filmed in February 2020 and aired a few months later. During the show, EcoWorks led 80+ volunteers in cleanup activities, invasive vine removal and planting of a conservation landscape at the downtown Welcome Center.





2020 BOARD

Richard Hesse, Retired, formerly COO/CFO The Maryland Science Center - Co-Chair

Bill Withers, Organizational Development Consultant – Co-Chair & Treasurer

Kevin McAliley, Bike HoCo – Vice Chair

Kris Althouse, HMS Insurance Associates – Secretary

Jim Caldwell, Past Director of Howard County Office of Sustainability and Director of Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection

Dave Gondoun*, former Crew Leader for READY and Cyber Security Engineer at Northrup Grumman

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Elizabeth Moss, Esq., CPPO, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Cynthia Paige-Desi*, Howard Community College

Laura Pasternak*, MarketPoint LLC

**Not pictured*

2020 STAFF

Lori Lilly, Executive Director

Don Tsusaki, Deputy Director

Ted Wolfe, Operations Director

Jenny Wienckowski, Landscape Design Manager

Genevieve Simard, Landscape Foreman

Virginia Gambrell, Nursery Manager

Jordan Bellido DeLuna, Program Assistant



PARTNERS AND DONORS

PARTNERS

1/ST Properties
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Association of Community Services
Barnside Condominium Association
Beechen Hills Community Association
Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council
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Deering Woods Condominium Association
Emerson Community Association
Elkhorn Landing Community Association
Ellicott City Partnership
First Presbyterian Church
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Hirschman Water & Environment
Howard Community College
Howard County Department of Corrections

Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks
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Howard County Public School System
Howard Hughes Corporation
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Kingsgate Condominium Association
Murray Hill Homeowner Association
NonProfit Collaborative
North St. John's Swim Club
Running Brook Homeowner Association
Sewells Orchard Homeowner Association
SilvoCulture
St Peter's Episcopal Church
Temple Isaiah
Walden's Landing Homeowner Association
University of Delaware

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

UP TO \$150

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\$600-1000

Laura Pasternak
 Whole Foods

\$3000

Patagonia

GRANTORS & SPONSORS

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 Chesapeake Bay Trust
 Community Foundation of Howard County
 Department of Housing and Community Development

Howard County Government
 Howard Hughes Corporation
 Karen Sachs Besson Foundation
 MD Department of Commerce
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

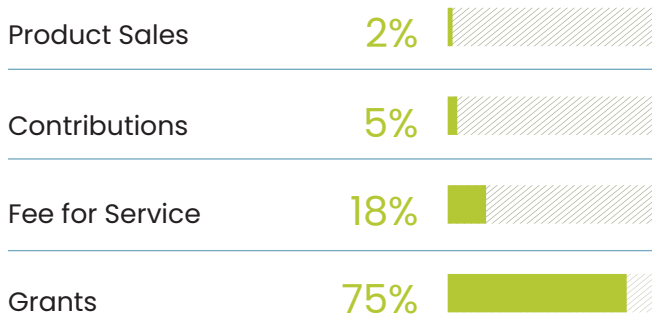
Patagonia
 Patapsco Valley Heritage Area
 Rotary Club of Columbia-
 Patuxent Charitable Trust

2020 FINANCIALS

SUPPORT & REVENUE

Grants \$564,056
 Fee for Service \$135,545
 Contributions \$37,345
 Product Sales \$13,895
 Other \$236

TOTAL REVENUE \$751,077

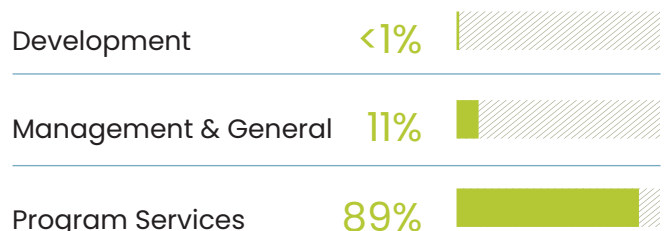


EXPENDITURES

Program Services \$584,492
 Supporting Services
 Management & General \$69,461
 Development \$5,129

TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$659,082

Change in Net Assets \$91,995



HOWARD ECOWORKS

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

What we have learned is that while nothing is completely predictable, we have demonstrated that we can adapt. The community reached out and we responded. We got creative in how we could help people. We will continue with the new businesses we created in 2020, and we will be revisiting the Strategic Plan that we developed just prior to the pandemic in late 2019.

We are hopeful as we look to 2021; our focus will be on business operations, ensuring that they are efficient and effective in order to provide financial sustainability to meet program goals. We are looking forward to cultivating existing partnerships, particularly Howard County Government, and developing new ones with:

- Another social enterprise, Humanim, an organization that builds pathways to employment, personal autonomy, and economic opportunity for those who need it most

- Inner Arbor Trust (IAT), a nonprofit organization that manages Symphony Woods around Merriweather Post Pavilion – we will partner with IAT to beautify and enhance the woodlands through conservation plantings
- Emerson Community Association, a community in Laurel with whom we are partnered to restore a one-acre forest conservation easement

We are also excited to continue improvements at our **Seeds of Change** nursery at the Howard County Corrections Department by increasing native plant production that will in turn support our rehabilitation and environmental sustainability programming there.

Howard EcoWorks is ready for a new year that expands on our passion for the environment, stewardship and community involvement.

WAYS TO GIVE

Mail your gift:

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 309
Columbia, Maryland 21046

Donate online:

www.howardecoworks.org

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