

GROW GREATER ENGLEWOOD

BUILD.CONNECT.PROTECT.



2023 SANKOFA REPORT



THANK YOU 2023 READY FOR 2024

To the Village...Reflecting on 2023:

Grow Greater Englewood has made so many advancements and has learned so many valuable lessons during this past year. Grounded and guided by our core values of Collective Work and Responsibility, Self Determination and Cooperative Economics, we can clearly see our collective working at the intersection of Agriculture and Environment Justice solutions.

We firmly believe there is power when we, as a Black community, organize, come together, show up and remain consistent and humble - 10 toes down -to build, connect and protect the next generation of Earth Stewards. Englewood is proudly becoming a hub for this mycelium network to grow within Chicago and in the state of Illinois.

This work goes beyond an impact report, and while we understand and navigate the language and systems that covet the need to demonstrate impact, we realize there is something else, a narrative that is not for exploitation.

The community requires something that illuminates the aspirations and challenges in our communities. And is our own.

We have borne witness to many Black people getting more involved in our neighborhoods - and this is happening across the city - who want to make life better for Black people in Chicago. This action ultimately makes Chicago a better place for everyone. We must know this and view it as a protracted struggle for liberation.

The needs of the Black community go far beyond actions that any one organization can manage alone. We must continue to build with each other, repair our trust and most importantly, not compete and disparage one another while working to improve the whole.

We can do that by confronting our truths, being accountable for any harm, and thus, asking for forgiveness from each other. This is the pathway for the healing we so desperately need in our city.

We are fully aware that the forces that seek to divide us will press even stronger this year.

Our city, our country, and the globe are all under siege, with people feeling despair via channels of (mis)information. The focus of the outrage is on the anger, pain and hurt, and does not allow for us to fully create what WE WANT to see and to build.

These challenges make us even more committed to claiming Black land and food sovereignty in a complex city like Chicago.

The issues that span across the globe are grounded in rabid capitalism and power systems that continue to dispossess our communities.

For 2024, we will continue to engage our communities across the South Side, as the need to address the health and well-being of our community is paramount for us.

As it is in our culture, we must all ask: How Are the Children?

We must arm the children with knowledge to build and fight for the protection of our community spaces, now and for our future generations.

As a community, Grow Greater Englewood is poised to take on the mounting challenges and opportunities to make change in our ever-evolving world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Seals', written in a cursive style.

Anton Seals Jr.,
Lead Steward
Grow Greater Englewood

THE GROW GREATER ENGLEWOOD TEAM



ENGLEWOOD NATURE TRAIL & AGRO-ECO DISTRICT



- Completed the Land Use Plan for the Englewood Agro-Eco District
- Created a Community Compact Framework
- Hosted and led more than a dozen public meetings since June 2022
- Began the Englewood Village Plaza Redesign for Spring 2024
- Hosted international artists Feda Wardak and Germane Barnes for Plaza features to debut in 2024
- Phase II of the Englewood Nature Trail Design will continue in 2024
- Tree Ambassador Program began trainings to direct tree planting across Englewood and West Englewood
- Continued to advocate for Chicago Park District to improve Englewood Parks
- Worked with the Greater Englewood Chamber to further organize, encourage and support businesses across the 59th Street corridor

Learn more at www.agroecoenglewood.org

ENGLEWOOD FOOD SOVEREIGNTY NETWORK



- Fed thousands of residents with free prepared meals, made by local Englewood and South Side food entrepreneurs
- Provided free fresh produce at local community events
- Introduced the innovative BLK BOX concept, featuring a curated box of local goods addressing access to fresh and healthy foods, sustainability, and supporting Black-owned businesses
- Collaborated with Teamwork Englewood, Growing Home, Go Green Community Fresh Market, and the Kindness Campaign to produce a direct mail and online Community Calendar
- Piloted a program in Englewood home daycares, exposing the Pre-K population to fresh foods, nutrition literacy, and the importance of farming, which will extend into EFSN's 2024 plans

ENGLEWOOD VILLAGE MARKET



- Welcomed new vendors, community music artists, and resource organizations, reinforcing its commitment to supporting and promoting Black-owned businesses and community resources
- Offered affordable fresh fruit and produce from Englewood Village Farms, Growing Home, and Midwest Foods, ensuring consistent availability of nutritious options in the community
- Became an FNS certified farmers' market, enabling the acceptance of EBT/Link payments and enhancing accessibility for a broader range of residents
- Continued to root GGE's presence in the community as a sponsor at the Englewood Music Festival, offering free fruit and produce, and promoting the Market and Grow Greater Englewood programs to thousands of attendees

ENGLEWOOD VILLAGE PLAZA



- Began construction on a full redesign of the Plaza with Botanical City. This is the first time in Chicago's history that soil was excavated, sent to a South Side remediation/bio digester facility to be turned into "Black Gold," and brought back to a public use space, creating a community regenerative "closed loop".
- Worked with a social entrepreneurship class at the Illinois Institute of Technology where students developed recommendations for sustainable business opportunities for the Englewood Village Market and Plaza, and ideas for repurposing vacant buildings along the proposed Englewood Nature Trail
- 30 Quaking Aspen trees were procured for use in the Chicago Architecture Biennial before being planted at the Plaza
- Became the recipient of a ComEd/EPRI sponsored Agriculture Pod, a cutting-edge controlled environment agriculture (CEA) farm within a custom shipping container; delivered and placed at the Plaza in December 2023

ENGLEWOOD VILLAGE FARMS COLLECTIVE



- Worked with NBFJA as members to develop a policy table to stay engaged in the Justice for Black Farmers Act
- Served as a partner to Chicago's Community Growers Program that selected 18 awardees to help increase equitable community access to healthy foods by creating new food access points in neighborhoods experiencing food insecurity
- Welcomed the installation of an agricultural pod at the Englewood Village Plaza; a program sponsored by ComEd and EPRI to help bring more locally-sourced produce into communities and education opportunities in agriculture. This is a controlled environment agriculture (CEA) farm made from a custom shipping container that uses electric technologies to create a microclimate that optimizes plant production year-round, and meets a range of community energy, water, and sustainability goals

BACKYARD GARDENS



- Continued to support 100 Englewood resident and community gardens
- Continued Apprenticeship and Internship Programs with a total of 13 apprentices and 28 seasonal interns, focusing on crop planning and seeding trainings, as well as developing their skills in carpentry, cooking, and meal preparation
- Built two greenhouses to extend the seedling growing season
- Held agricultural lessons for students at the Academy of St. Benedict, and installed gardens and offered lessons at Barbara A. Sizemore Academy, with a goal of building out a larger agricultural program for students in 2024

ENGLEWOOD COMMUNITY LAND TRUST



- Successfully purchased 2 vacant lots from the Cook County Land Bank (CCLB) to be used to expand the work of the Englewood Village Farms Collective
- Worked in collaboration with Here to Stay Community Land Trust and LSNA to support a Community Land Trust Task Force at the State level (Bill SB2037)
- Refined ECLT's Land Acquisition and Preservation Strategy to focus on land uses that are complementary to the development of the Englewood Nature Trail and an urban agriculture ecosystem
- Worked with the Englewood Quality of Life Plan Housing Task Force to create a comprehensive neighborhood housing strategy focused on homeowner, buyer and renters' resources
- Nominated and selected to serve a 2-year term on the National Black Food & Justice Alliance's (NFBJA) Resource Commons Council

Learn more at www.engagewoodclt.org

ARTS & CULTURE



- Hosted international artist Ezra Wube for a 5-day residency, culminating in a short animation called *Engleroots* to be released in 2024
- Deepened relationships with members of the Highline Network, sharing insights from the arts and culture work GGE incorporates in our programming
- Curated a "one-night-only" live band for GGE's Night Bazaar, the final event of the Urban Ag Crawl
- Supported resident artist Gloria Rivera in the wrap design for the Urban Ag Pod at the Englewood Village Plaza
- Began creating the narrative for the Englewood story for the Nature Trail land use plan
- Began creative discussions for an audio series for the Guardians of the Trail; the story of Black Chicago

POLICY & ADVOCACY



- Developed an advocacy program to educate and prepare residents to effectively monitor, influence, and control development-related activities in Englewood
- Assisted State Rep. Mary Beth Canty in gathering information for SB 850 (signed into legislation by Governor JB Pritzker) to establish the Illinois Grocery Initiative designed to address food deserts by supporting existing grocers and encouraging new stores to open
- Collaborated with NBFJA members to create a policy table to stay engaged in the Justice for Black Farmers Act in the 2023 Farm Bill
- Joined State Rep. Sonya M. Harper for the Inaugural Illinois Black Farmers and Growers Lobby Day on April 26, 2023 to advocate for equity in Illinois' agricultural food production and cannabis industries. HR 164 was adopted and declared April 23-29 as Black Farmers Week to encourage Illinois residents and their representatives to learn about the history of Black farming communities and the contributions made by African Americans to agriculture.

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS



BLACKS IN GREEN



ENGLEWOOD & WEST ENGLEWOOD RESIDENTS



In 2023, GGE proudly contributed \$300,000 back into community groups and partners working to make a crucial and positive impact in Englewood.

Mini Land Grants for Resident Land Improvements

Branding Englewood E-Dub Mobile & Fall Fest Sponsorships

Hyde Park Summer Festival Sponsorship

Englewood Back to School Parade Sponsorship

Englewood Live Wire Wrestling Club Tournament Donation

**Greater Englewood Community Development Corporation
Englewood Music Fest Sponsorship**

**Hustle Mommies Paint the Hood Orange Englewood Block
Party Sponsorship**

Imagine Englewood If... Unity Day & Peace Fest Sponsorships

Kingdom Avenue Academy Stomp the Yard Sponsorship

Live the Spirit Residency Donation

Marie Wesley Fashion Show Sponsorship

**Mr. Dad's Father's Club Father's Day Event &
Youth Matters March Donations**

Save Our Community Coalition Community Event Donations

Silver Room Block Party Sponsorship

Something Good in Englewood College Tour Donation

**Teamwork Englewood 20th Anniversary Gala & Englewood
Senior Empowerment Summit Sponsorships**

Think Outside Da Block Roll N Peace Sponsorship

**BIG
THANKS
TO OUR
FUNDERS!**



**SPECIAL
THANKS TO
OUR DONORS &
SUPPORTERS!**

2024 PRIORITIES

BUILD. CONNECT. PROTECT

SourSop Leaves
+ Leaf Powder

Tea and Tea Bags
* Organic

P's Gluten Free
Granola

B'Gabs Granola
Vegetarian

Incense Sticks

Tubby's Taste Vegan
Cookies (Japanese inspired)

- Opening of the Ujima Hive Community Hub
- Launch of the Urban Earth Corp.
- Phase II of the Englewood Nature Trail Design
- Finalizing Englewood Agro-Eco District Land Use Plan & Community Repair Compact Framework
- Launch of Community Control School
- The Blk Box
- Year 5 of the Englewood Village Market

AND HOW ARE THE CHILDREN?



Africa's mighty Masai tribe uses the greeting, "Kasserian Ingera," which means, "And how are the children?"

This traditional greeting acknowledges the high value that the Masai place on their children's well-being. Even warriors with no children always give the traditional answer, "All the children are well." This means that life is good and the daily struggles of existence do not preclude proper caring for the young.

We are working to build, connect and protect our communities so when we ask each other, "And how are the children?" our answer can always be, "All the children are well."



We need YOU
to join us on this journey
to create the beautiful spaces
we deserve in our communities!



connect@growgreater.org

www.growgreater.org

linktr.ee/GGEGrow



**GROW
GREATER
ENGLEWOOD**