



# Sustaining Way Strategic Plan: 2022-2026





VISION:

**Sustaining Way  
envisions a  
world where all  
neighborhoods,  
people and  
nature thrive.**

MISSION:

Sustaining Way uses education, collaboration and advocacy to create sustainable, caring and equitable communities for current and future generations.

VALUES:

## Thriving Together

We believe that sustainability starts with the purposeful inclusion of all people in solidarity and mutuality. Inclusion is essential to building just relationships among ourselves as we shape our collective future. This may require slowing things down to allow space for civil dialogue, but this is vital to cultivating a just and equitable society that is resilient and enduring.

## Celebrating Faith

We believe in the power of faith to catalyze people to make changes for the common good. Because of this, we work as an interfaith organization. We celebrate and embrace all faiths and non-faiths that center on love and compassion for others.

## Practicing Stewardship

All of our work is in an effort to care for people and the planet. We understand the urgency to address the challenges that face us. Therefore, we are committed to taking bold action and sustained effort every day to accomplish our mission with the knowledge that lives are on the line.

## Committing to Integrity & Truth

Integrity is the foundation on which we build trust and just relationships. We are committed to sound moral and ethical principles. We do everything possible to live up to the commitments we have made. We make our decisions based on facts and research. We seek and expect excellence in ourselves and in how we interact with each other.

## Addressing Race, Equity & Justice

Until all people thrive, no society can claim to be just and equitable. We recognize that structural racism is embedded as normal practice within every system in American society. We must continually seek to understand our own prejudices and advocate for equity, inclusion and justice in all of our systems.

**We develop servant leaders that live out these values and humbly carry them out into the world!**

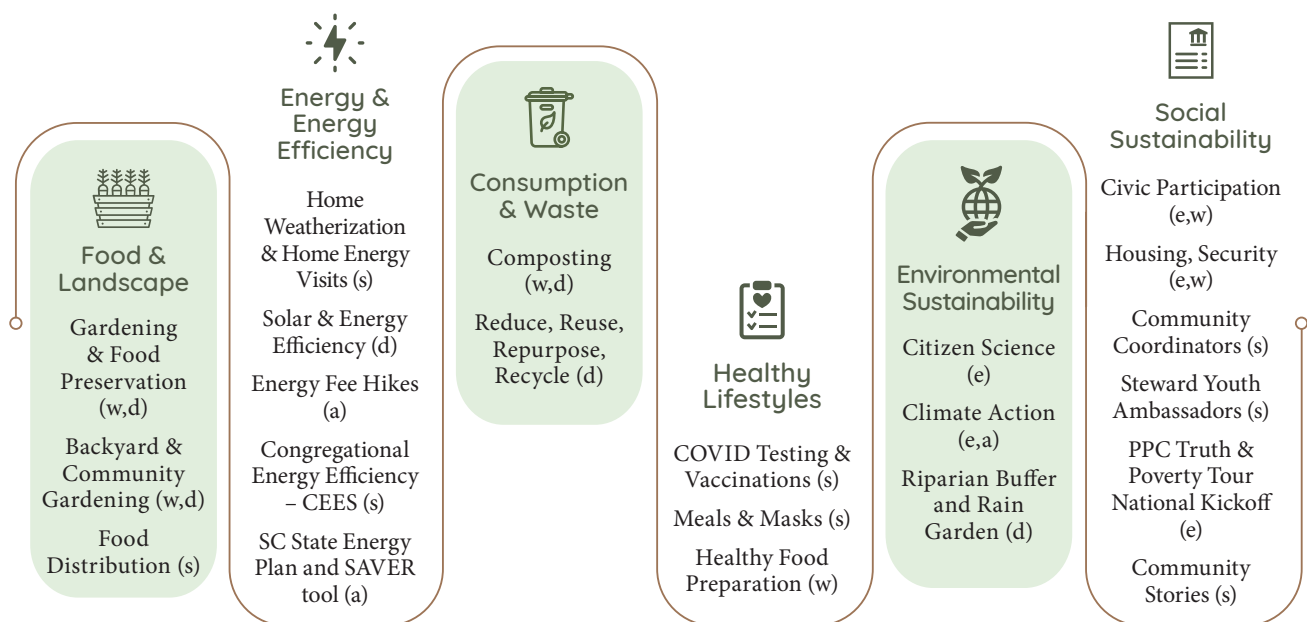
# Thriving Together

In aiming to create sustainable, caring and equitable communities for current and future generations, Sustaining Way uses a unique interfaith, holistic and community-based approach focused on education, collaboration, and advocacy. To us, a sustainable community is one that is able to maintain and improve its well-being for the years to come. All actions are framed through the lens of sustainability, which we simply define as Caring for People, Caring for the Environment and Affordability.



When we think of sustainability, we break it into six areas through which we integrate our work. Our focus and priorities for action in these areas are based on community assets, needs, and input.

*Examples of Sustaining Way's work across the six focus areas of sustainability – many of which, while placed in one focus area below – are intertwined with and affect multiple focus areas.*



Education

w=Workshop, e=Event, d=Annie's House Demonstration, s= Service, a=Advocacy

## Focus Areas of Sustainability

We prioritize our work in these areas based on where the community leads. Recognizing and building on existing community assets and culture, our efforts will be successful when we bring together community members and diverse stakeholders to identify common goals and work collectively to achieve them.

This process is continual and requires dual thinking – considering how to meet today’s needs while also looking ahead to our impact on future generations. Sustainability is both people-centered and systems-centered. Thus, we integrate environmental care and protection with economic development, affordable housing, health, public safety, mobility, and policy because each aspect of the community is interrelated and must be addressed in a holistic way.

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“We anticipate continued strong growth at a scale that meets the challenges historically marginalized communities face. By 2030, we envision a large network of high-impact servant leaders carrying our mission and values into the world and a nationwide network of communities that are learning, collaborating and advocating together to build a more sustainable, caring and equitable future both locally and globally.”



*Michael Brown, Executive Director/ Vice Chairman  
& Rick Joye, Founder / Board Chairman*

## Theory of Change

Sustaining Way's theory of change defines not only the change we envision in the world, but also how we achieve it. We believe communities, their people, and their institutions can create change when they have knowledge and skills, strong connections, effective institutions, investment opportunities, and the ability to innovate and test solutions. But the real impact comes with scale, which is why we are developing sustainability leaders, expanding the availability of technical expertise, strengthening networks, and creating a model that can be replicable from community to community.

## CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

- Communities are willing to participate
- Communities define and drive the change
- Partnerships exist to facilitate change
- Communities and voices are equal
- Institutions and systems must be addressed
- Our team lives by its values

# COMMUNITY ASSETS

# LONGTERM OUTCOMES



Active, engaged citizens



Responsible community leaders



Systems and policies support sustainability



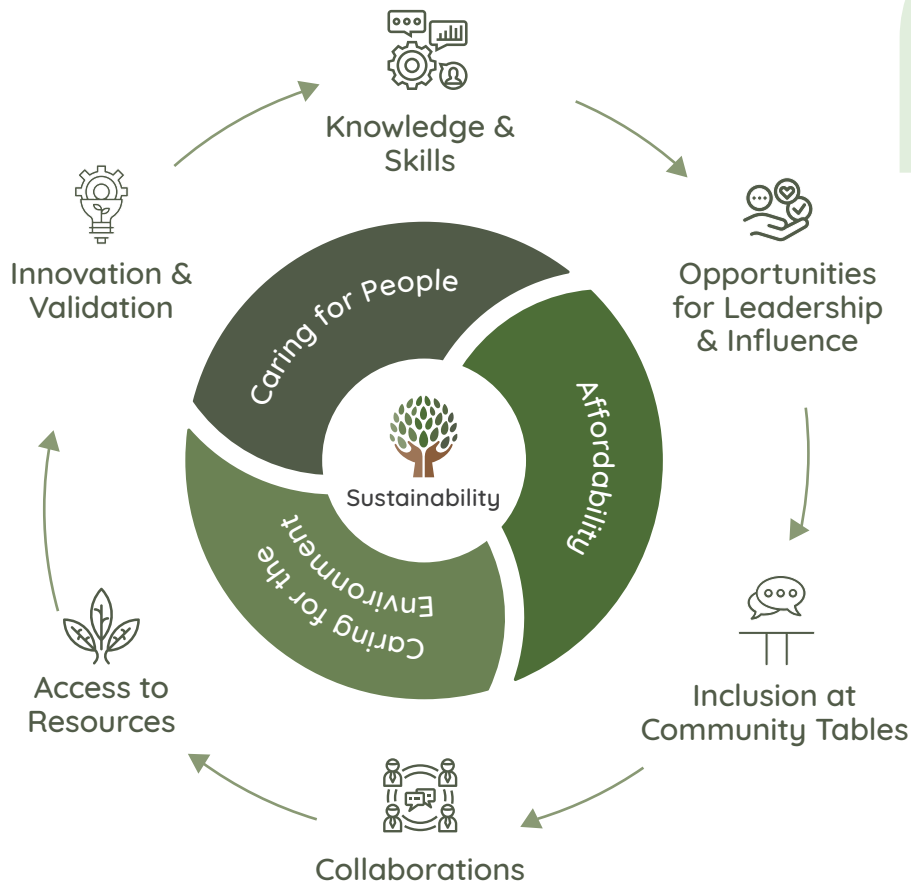
Communities improve and sustain social, physical, and economic health



Sustainable, caring, and equitable communities are the "norm"



A world where all neighborhoods, people and nature thrive



## ACTIVITIES



**Education**  
Community  
Demonstration Site  
Partners  
K-12



**Leadership Development**  
Stewards Programs  
Community Coordinators  
Apprenticeships



**Engage and Collaborate**  
Connect need with  
resources and opportunity



**Advocacy**  
Amplify voices  
Systems & policy change

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES



Educate to Transform:  
Education

## GOAL 1: Become a recognized education hub in the region around sustainability, equity, and justice.

### 1.1

Grow community education within the communities we serve through open houses, community forums, demonstration site tours, virtual workshops, and customized education sessions that align with each community's assets, needs, and goals.

### 1.2

Create an easily accessible resource hub offering educational resources, tools, and guidance around sustainability, RDEI, and environmental justice topics. Develop and compile educational resources (best-practices, tools kits, articles, presentations, state-wide webinars) to be available through the website and trainings.

### 1.3

Provide education to our partner network to ensure alignment around community-centered sustainability and equity.

### 1.4

Provide youth education in schools, afterschool, and summer programs and through serving as a field trip venue.

# Educate to Transform: Leadership Development

“Serving with Sustaining Way has provided me with the space to identify my values, beliefs, and passions and will forever positively guide my personal and professional life.”

— Kristan Pitts  
Community Coordinator,  
2015-2017



**GOAL 2: Develop and prepare leaders and advocates of sustainability who will serve as role models and advocates of sustainability, equity, and justice, positively impacting our communities today and in the future.**

### 2.1

Strengthen and expand the number of participants in leadership development programs and ensure inclusion of members from the local community as program participants:

- Community Coordinators - Refine the Community Coordinator Program in each community served. Align the number of coordinators to the scope of work planned and funding available.
- Ambassadors Program - Develop Ambassadors who will serve as advocates and help connect community members with community assets.
- Apprenticeship Program - Connect individuals from the local community to training opportunities that develop sustainability-based trade skills leading to employment.
- Steward Leaders and Fellows (high school) Program - Maintain the year-round Steward Leaders and summer Fellows program. Replicate where appropriate.

### 2.2

Expand influence by connecting trained sustainability leaders to opportunities.

## GOAL 3: Catalyze community action so that communities and individuals can realize their goals.

### 3.1

Build relationships and trust within our community.

### 3.2

Work with residents and community partners to identify the critical priorities and assets available to build upon.

### 3.3

Collaborate within our community to connect partner organizations, resources, and efforts that address community priorities such as: food and housing insecurity, leadership development, civic engagement, etc.

### 3.4

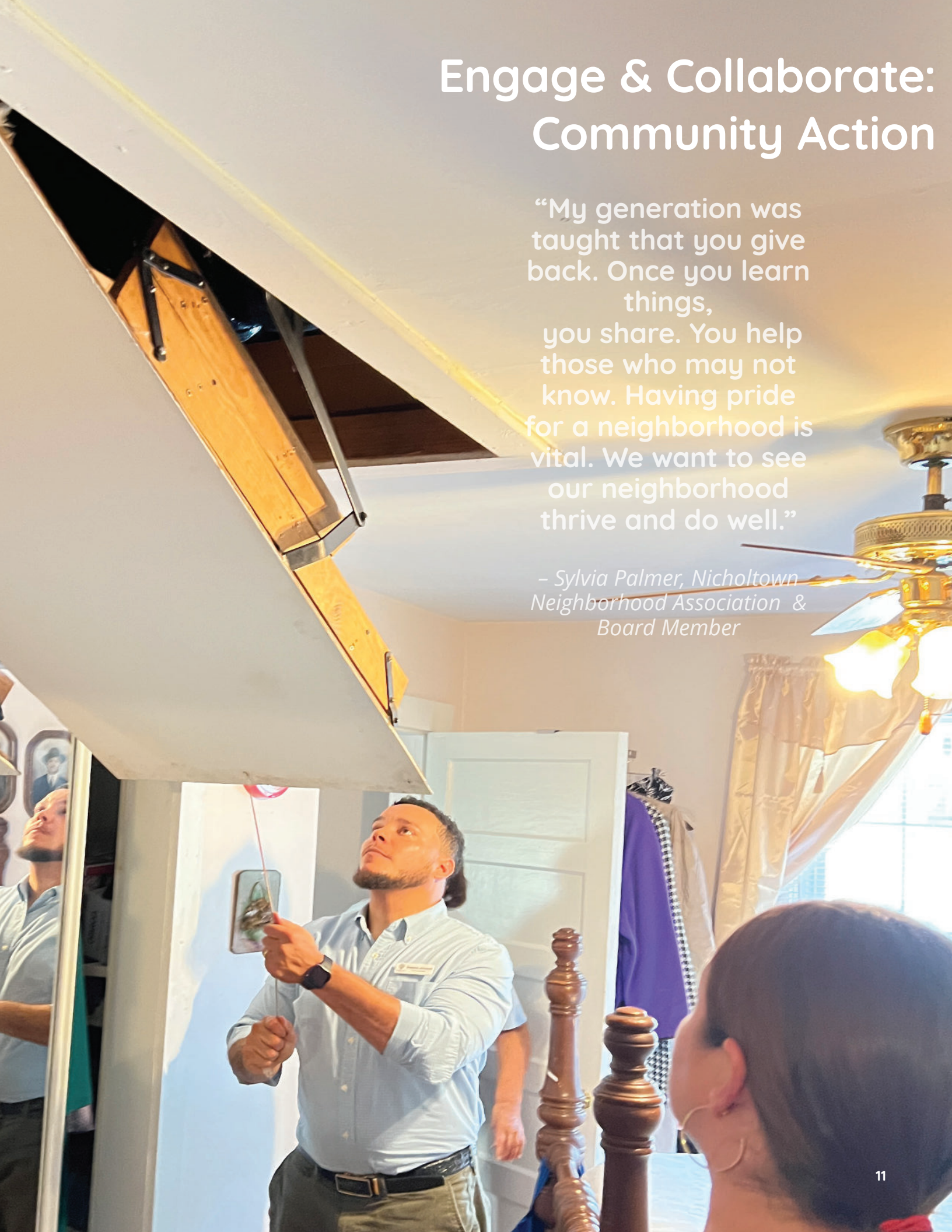
Continue to implement, strengthen, and maintain community assets that support resident sustainability and resiliency through programs such as: Food Share programs, Backyard Gardening, and Energy Home Visits.



# Engage & Collaborate: Community Action

“My generation was taught that you give back. Once you learn things, you share. You help those who may not know. Having pride for a neighborhood is vital. We want to see our neighborhood thrive and do well.”

– Sylvia Palmer, Nicholtown  
Neighborhood Association &  
Board Member





# Advocate: Be a Sustainability Champion

**GOAL 4: Serve as a sustainability champion advocating with our community around issues of sustainability, equity, and justice.**

## **4.1**

Maintain an advocacy and policy guidebook and provide advocacy training for board, staff, and all leadership development programs.

## **4.2**

Leverage partnerships to advocate collectively for the common good.

## **4.3**

Remain aware of and responsive to community issues, serving as an advocacy platform when appropriate (ex. fee hike). Develop an advocacy agenda and update it annually.



# Impact & Grow: Expand Our Community Development Model

“You get to learn how to serve. It’s not just about your wants. It’s about what’s best for the community and how the organization can prioritize that. That’s what leadership is. It’s not telling someone what to do; it’s about helping others grow and gaining trust.”

– Ebony Flowers  
Engagement Coordinator,  
2018-2019

## GOAL 5: Expand Sustaining Way's community development model including its impact and reach throughout the state, region, and nation.

### 5.1

Increase capacity needed for impact and growth:

- 5.1.1 Expand capabilities and capacity at Annie's House and in Nicholtown to support evaluating, finalizing, and proliferating the Sustaining Way model.
- 5.1.2 Develop and implement an organizational growth and transition model to include succession planning for key leadership positions by Q2 2022.
- 5.1.3 Grow fund development efforts to maintain the targeted diversity and level of funding.
- 5.1.4 Evaluate and revise the composition of the board to support expansion while continuing to ensure that board and policy best practices are in place and utilized.
- 5.1.5 Develop the means to efficiently and effectively manage stakeholder relationships, fundraising, and assets/outcomes.
- 5.1.6 Increase Sustaining Way's brand and impact recognition.
- 5.1.7 Identify and secure required strategic partnerships in areas identified as critical (ex. education, advocacy, RDEI, sustainability, ABCD, etc.).

### 5.2

Amplify reach and impact by leveraging, guiding, and providing support for the faith-based community through South Carolina Interfaith Power and Light (SCIPL) and the health professional community through South Carolina Health Professionals for Climate Action (SCHPCA).

### 5.3

FIVE in FIVE - Evaluate, finalize and expand the Sustaining Way model to additional communities throughout the state and/or region. Develop the model blueprint, including outcomes and best practices, and expand to a total of five communities by the EOY 2025 with at least one additional community by Q1 2023.



# Environmental Education Association of South Carolina

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## Awards & Recognitions

### 2019

#### **"Angel" award from Secretary of State**

Sustaining Way was one of ten nonprofits selected throughout SC for "Angel" award by Secretary of State. These organizations "exemplify charitable giving in the state, with selections based on a review of financial reports as well as nominated from the public."

### 2020

#### **eTown eChievement Award**

Sustaining Way was recognized by national broadcaster eTown for "making a positive difference in our community and beyond." We support eTown's mission "to educate, entertain and inspire a diverse audience, through music and conversation, in order to create a socially responsible and environmentally sustainable world."

### 2021

#### **Environmental Equity and Justice Award**

Upstate Forever recognized Sustaining Way as the 2021 recipient of the Environmental Equity and Justice Award. This award recognizes a business, organization or individual that has made significant contributions to environmental equity and justice in the Upstate.

#### **Proclamation by City of Greenville**

Mayor of Greenville Knox White recognized ten years since the vision to begin Annie's House and Sustaining Way on January 8, 2011, and the significant impact to Nicholtown and the city of Greenville.

#### **Proclamation by Greenville County Council**

The Council recognized ten years since the vision to begin Annie's House and Sustaining Way on January 8, 2011, and the significant impact to Nicholtown and the county of Greenville.

#### **Habitat for Humanity of Greenville**

**County** recognized Sustaining Way with their Good Neighbor Award. Sustaining Way has partnered with the local affiliate on several housing projects, including Energy Home Visit upgrades, in the Nicholtown community.

### 2023

#### **Sustaining Way was recognized as the Nonprofit of the Year by the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina.**

The EEASC promotes and supports quality, timely, and innovative environmental education, with a focus on improved environmental literacy for all ages.



### Sustaining Way

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