



Nature in the City Insider 2023

Finance, Advisory Council, & Operations

Nature in the City's fiscal year closes on June 30th. For the first time in our 18-year history, we project our annual income to be over \$500,000, a significant milestone! Thanks to you, our funders, we have grown. This year, 47% of revenue came from grants & contracts, 27% gardening services, 20% members & donors, 6% corporate & workplace gifts, and a small fraction from merchandise.

In 2023, as in years past, our programs benefited from concerted Advisory Council effort, netting **Nature in the City** an estimated \$39,686 worth of skilled, dedicated, mission-centered pro-bono services, including nurturing relationships, coordinating walks & events, executive coaching, and deepening partnerships.



Nature in the City College Corps Intern, Entinosa Osagie-Amayo and Laura Castellini, Advisory Council Chair at Garden for the Environment, May 2023/Photo: Amber Hasselbring.

We hired a gardening crew lead/habitat stewardship coordinator who is effectively merging the two programs. Also, an excellent College Corps fellow (pictured above) joined the team for almost a year, supporting habitat restoration. Gardening services expanded to serve 215 clients in 2022, and we increased garden intern stipends from \$75 to \$120 per day.

Goals & Challenges

We have made significant progress in staff retention, finance, impacts, and partnerships and have increased to five full-time equivalent employees. However, we do not have recurring funding committed to sustain NTC year after year. While fundraising is inherent for nonprofits, the time it demands impacts our program delivery and creates stress. People long to be in a community where they can connect with nature, care for it, and learn more about actions they can take on behalf of climate and biodiversity.

Nature in the City provides something for everyone in this regard: hands-on restoration, virtual nature talks & events, walks, gardening services, partnership, and advocacy. If we ceased to exist, San Francisco would lose a comprehensive resource for nature conservation, biodiversity, collaboration, unity, and action.



Gardening Crew Lead & Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, Amelia Eglund, in a client's garden/Photo: Ryan Tachibana

Habitat Stewardship & Gardening Programs, San Francisco

Nature in the City works with residents, volunteers, communities, and city agencies to install and steward wildlife habitats in San Francisco. In 2023, we merged the Gardening and Habitat Stewardship programs to increase staff and intern involvement in public and private habitat restoration.

The Gardening program designs, installs, and maintains climate-adapted, biodiverse gardens in San Francisco and provides internships to young adults—we provide opportunities to learn about the field and receive hands-on training and professional development. Since 2021, nine interns have graduated from the program and are working in STEM-related fields. The garden program has earned \$481,200 in revenue from 2019-2023.

The Stewardship program implements community events for hundreds of volunteers to engage with the work year-round. Our three flagship sites across San Francisco rely on grants, donations, and volunteers for continued care. We have managed over \$900,000 in grants and contracts (2014-2022) from public and private entities. Nature in the City created an iNaturalist community science project with wildlife observations at habitat sites. As of 2023, 2,113 people have made 12,058 observations of 1,681 species across our projects since 2008!

Goals & Challenges

Caring for the land and stewarding wildlife habitat is a cultural awakening everyone needs, and our goal is to cultivate and increase that awareness and responsibility. Volunteer numbers fluctuate; therefore, we depend on a complex interplay of partnerships to help amplify and support our work for the common good, community development, and life on Earth.

Green Hairstreak Corridor, Golden Gate Heights & Inner Sunset

The **Green Hairstreak Corridor** (GHC) project in Golden Gate Heights is a series of 13 habitat sites connecting significant natural areas for the Green Hairstreak butterfly and other wildlife. The beautiful iridescent Green Hairstreak butterfly is locally threatened and flies along the California coast.

Nature in the City is proud to share that our iNaturalist project has identified [966 distinct plants and animals](#) (with the number growing continually) living alongside residents in this neighborhood.

Over time, 300 volunteers have signed up to care for these sites. This urban wildlife corridor consists of restored public habitats for the butterfly, a species that would have become locally extinct if not for our efforts. We have created “stepping stone” habitats (diverse with native plantings) between more extensive natural open spaces to increase populations and genetic diversity. Project partners: Hoover Middle School, where students have cared for the butterfly habitat as part of the Corridor at Hawk Hill, an open space adjacent to their school; Garden for the Environment, where this community has hungered for more knowledge and understanding about the role native plants play in the local ecosystem; and White Crane Springs Community Garden, where members help NTC grow native plants for the Corridor and where hundreds of native plants fill garden beds & enhance ecological function and community wellbeing. In addition, we work closely with the Golden Gate Heights Homeowner’s Association, Sunset Heights Association of Responsible People, and District 7 Supervisor Myrna Melgar’s office.



Green Hairstreak butterfly staying out of the cold, foggy day during our Green Hairstreak Corridor Open house, April 2023/Photo: Gayle Laird.

Goals & Challenges

The Green Hairstreak Corridor has received donations, small grants, SF Unified School District participation, and volunteer labor since 2007. We aim to acquire considerable funding and expand our efforts with like-minded agencies and organizations. Expansion means the corridor can be a model for other areas and cities, demonstrating that restoring urban nature is possible, beautiful, and immensely beneficial to people’s well-being. The GHC project is eligible for larger grants and more significant individual donor support; currently, we provide a 20% full-time equivalent habitat coordinator role who receives assistance from interns and volunteers. With increased funding, we aim to make this a full-time, sustaining position.

Palou Phelps Park, Tampa Lane, Bayview Hunters Point

This project, completed in 2021, included installing a split-rail fence to protect a sensitive rare wildflower grassland hillside and over 600 pollinator plantings at Palou Phelps Park. We translated materials into English, Spanish, and Chinese during the outreach period. Due to Nature in the City and the Friends of Palou Phelps’ advocacy, the SF Recreation & Parks Department installed a community message board in the park. The Friends of Palou Phelps Park, with help from NTC and SFRPD, maintain the plantings and park overall.

NTC secured over \$150,000 in combined grant funding and contributions from individuals supporting this project. Community members and SFRPD continue to water, weed, advocate, and deepen their connection with this place, and we are happy to help by providing volunteer support via our outreach.

In 2023, we learned that development threatens four privately-owned parcels on the hillside. Nature in the City is working with the Friends of Palou Phelps, California Native Plant Society, and other partners to demonstrate the importance of this native place for biodiversity and human connection so that much of the sensitive habitat on the hillside will remain for generations to come.

Goals & Challenges

Nature in the City plans to support the community's advocacy efforts to maintain the hillside as an open space and sensitive grassland habitat. We will continue to support habitat stewardship by listing the workday on [NTC's events calendar](#) and Meetup, and by recruiting and engaging people who have signed up over the years and as the community expresses a need for more volunteers.

Adah's Stairway, Buena Vista

This beautiful garden and stairway were dedicated to local walking guru Adah Bakalinsky in 2012 by a Board Of Supervisors Committee that approved renaming the Waller Street Steps in Buena Vista Park, [Adah's Stairway](#). We have worked with the community to respond to their and nature's needs and actively care for this beautiful garden stairway for eleven years. All along, local neighborhood residents and City of San Francisco partners provided in-kind services, significant donations, and grants to fund capital improvements. This year, as we've done in the past, we've helped organize and provide staffing for twelve monthly community workdays, hosting ten to 15 volunteers per workday. We have provided consulting services on plantings, design, and maintenance and sought to empower residents to care for the site. The beautifully designed [Adah's Stairway](#) is lush with plants; there is a public water fountain at the lower portion; there are terraces made with stacked Napa Basalt to retain soils; and the gardens are alive with abundant wildlife.

All the gardens we care for benefit from a local community engaged in workdays, social and educational events, and small fundraisers to support their needs. All this deepens people's connections with local nature and with each other. Our various garden sites dotted throughout San Francisco are bright spots in neighborhoods.

Goals & Challenges

Our goal for 2023 is to hand over the leadership of monthly community volunteer workdays to neighbors. NTC will continue recruiting volunteers for [Adah's Stairway](#) stewardship and organizing/leading *corporate* group workdays. This approach will help Nature in the City generate sustainability while continuing to connect this community to nature.

BART/MUNI Canopy Living Roofs, Downtown San Francisco

Since 2018, Nature in the City has advocated installing living roofs on BART/MUNI's new station entrance canopies on Market Street. In the 1980s, when the City first planted London plane trees, Western tiger swallowtail butterflies (*Papilio rutulus*) began living a precarious existence among the bustle of Market Street. From the butterfly's perspective, Market Street, with tall buildings lined with trees and nearby

sun-filled plazas & parks, resembles its natural habitat: a river canyon with the butterfly's larval food trees and nectar flowers in nearby meadows.

But there is one big problem: nectar plants are scarce in this "canyon." Thus, Nature in the City began the [Tigers on Market Street](#) project in 2012 to raise awareness and enhance habitat. Since then, we have participated in pop-up events, walks, and the Market Street Prototyping Festival. We discuss—and demonstrate—the Tigers' story on walking tours showcasing public nature-themed murals and public art, provide a field guide to Downtown and train people on making iNaturalist observations.

The living roofs concept aligns with the [15-minute City](#) idea: cities could be (re)designed for all residents to access their daily needs (housing, work, food, health, education, culture, and leisure & access to nature) all within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. Time spent in nature improves mental health and well-being. Living roofs to Downtown would retain biodiversity, reduce ambient temperatures, provide clean air, filter and absorb rainwater—and add great beauty!



The Living Roofs project dovetails with Mayor London Breed's [Roadmap to Downtown San Francisco's future](#).

Aaron Peskin, President, Board of Supervisors, fully endorses the project. Biodiversity, volunteerism, the common good, and a genuine connection to nature can be part of life for all who live, work, and play in San Francisco. Recently, by invitation from BART and the City, NTC began designing living roofs for installation on the transit canopies.

BART/MUNI Canopies, like this one at Powell Street Station, were designed to come alive with Western Tiger Swallowtail butterfly habitat on living roofs and art on the underside/Photo: VIA—A Perkins Eastman Studio.

NTC engaged Resonate Agency's Kristi Yim in 2022-2023. With her proven corporate sponsorship success in San Francisco and other major cities, Kristi launched a corporate giving program to fund the roofs. She has solicited 137 corporations that fulfilled the criteria of the best potential sponsors: serving Downtown or headquartered close to the two pilot roofs; contacts with whom she had long-established relationships; and corporations who typically allocate budget funds for sponsorships.

We plan to install one or two pilot roofs at Montgomery and Powell Street stations in winter 2023, given fundraising and agreements are satisfactory for BART/MUNI and Nature in the City. BART commits to funding up to \$200,000 to establish the living roofs.

Goals & Challenges

Like many cities after the Covid-19 Pandemic, San Francisco is experiencing difficulty getting the workforce to return Downtown. Estimates from 2023 are that 26% of workers generally and 64% of workers in the technology sector are working remotely. Add to that the significant number of layoffs in that sector and the resulting release of office space. Consequently, local businesses need more customers.

It's not surprising, but hugely disappointing, that the timing for this beautiful project is out of kilter. Effects from the pandemic are still reverberating, and corporations and businesses are not willing, at this time, to provide financial sponsorship. However, many are enthusiastic and have asked us to contact them again in a year or so.

NTC is amplifying the project through contacts Kristi/Resonate helped establish, and we also seek grant funding. Our goal is to showcase the importance of nature in cities.

1. Seek grants in partnership with BART, nonprofits, and community benefit districts;
2. Launch a donation-based campaign to generate funding from businesses, NTC donors, and those new to our work;
3. Resonate Agency continues to follow up with potential sponsors and build a comprehensive strategy with other sponsorship sales professionals in San Francisco;

We anticipate these next steps will generate publicity, deepen partnerships, ignite enthusiasm, and provide funding—creating a unified action to revitalize San Francisco's Downtown—of which the **BART/MUNI Canopy Living Roofs** project is an essential and beautiful component. The public fully embraces the concept, and we are confident it will take flight! Now, it's a matter of riding out the cyclical slowdown in San Francisco and continuing to inspire others with this eminently doable project.

Future Stewards of the Planet, Bay Area

Nature in the City invests in the next generation of environmental stewards and climate activists. With an emphasis on underserved young people of color, our partner, Enterprise for Youth, recruits and trains interns, nurturing their desire to develop solutions to the significant challenges of our time: the interwoven crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

Climate Career Corps: NTC and Enterprise for Youth started the **Climate Career Corps** (CCC) program in June 2022! Two hundred and fifty young people (ages 14-22) joined nonprofits and companies for a season of learning and exploring their future environmental career opportunities. Excellent mentors working throughout the Bay Area hosted youth. The **Climate Career Corps** also supports **San Francisco's Climate Action Plan**, which provides pathways to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 while advancing racial and social equity. In the Summer of 2023 we will place 300 young people in climate careers.

Gardening Technicians & Interns: interns looking to deepen their connection to nature play a critical role in NTC's gardening program; they receive professional development and hands-on training in client gardens while exploring their next steps in various environmental fields.



Each year, NTC plants 500 to 2,000 upland dune natives in the Green Hairstreak Corridor. This tapestry of life supports the people who enjoy coming together to care for habitat, 16th Avenue Tiled Steps, 2022/Photo: Laura Castellini.

College Corps Fellowship Program: during school years spanning 2022 - 2024, we work with up to four students, paid a living wage by the State of California, to intern with Nature in the City and other organizations. The interns shadow staff and site stewards during workdays, outreach to the community at tabling events, attend staff and advisory council meetings, and monitor Nature in the City's impacts.

USF and SF State Students: annually, approximately ten students participate in enriching volunteer experiences lasting from one to three months. In years past, students have created educational brochures, helped distribute [Backyard Natives Nursery](#) plants to volunteers' backyards, and brought their classes out to help restore and monitor butterfly habitats.

Goals & Challenges

Young people worldwide experience two significant responses to the climate crisis. These polar perspectives can be characterized by a) agency: "I can help stop the destruction," and fatalistic: "I feel hopeless/helpless." Of those that feel agency, their anger translates into a hunger for understanding climate crisis causes, education on biodiversity, land management, science, and the mitigation measures we all can take together. They feel an urgency. Those who despair may be unaware of the work to restore native habitats, save species from extinction successfully, and the many innovative discoveries helping prevent pollution.

NTC seeks to demonstrate and share our successes and knowledge and inspire young people. We wish to harness their potential, channel it, feed it, and unleash it. As young people are our future earth stewards, we must strengthen our programs. We seek to provide more pathways to environmental education through funding, specifically for internship host network-building and placement and wages for the stewards.

Partnerships & Outreach: Events, Walks, Presentations

NTC partners in projects, public events, education, and exhibits. This results in people of all ages gaining awareness, biodiversity education, and volunteering.

We participated by tabling at STEM Frenzy in April; California Academy of Sciences during Earth Day weekend in April; Exploratorium After Dark in May; and Green Hairstreak Corridor Open House in May. We organized 22 nature walks & events in 2022 and, so far, eight in 2023, with another ten planned in summer and fall.

In partnership with the Exploratorium, SF Environment, and the California Academy of Sciences, NTC held an Exploratorium After Dark event to celebrate the Wild in the City map's 30th anniversary. This beautiful artwork sparked an ecological revolution in San Francisco. The event included dynamic speakers from multiple generations and ethnicities. It was standing-room-only that night! In addition to this, NTC partnered with Atlassian for a second year, and their Atlassian team restored habitat during three events and helped upgrade NTC's technology.

SNAP: the [Sunset Nature Advocacy Partnership](#), thanks to funding from SHARP (Sunset Heights Association of Responsible People), SNAP entered year two of cross-promotion and cooperative events. In May, SNAP presented a lovely, educational event for Spanish-speaking audiences.



Reimagining San Francisco is a collective of more than 40 agencies and nonprofits working to improve biodiverse habitats, increase nature access, and create stewardship opportunities for everyone, 2022/Photo: California Academy of Sciences.

Reimagining San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences has taken the lead in convening 40+ local agencies and nonprofits to create a cultural and habitat restoration revolution that will bring nature into everyday life for all San Franciscans. NTC is delighted to participate, and we anticipate deepened partnerships and creative opportunities for cooperative funding for our projects & campaigns.

NTC Presents: we developed a public virtual series to highlight new perspectives on science, youth voices, partnerships, and other learnings: The Green Hairstreak Showcase, in January, hosted 41 attendees, and a Report Back from the Montreal COP

Biodiversity Summit by Peter Brastow, Nature in the City Founder & Senior Biodiversity Coordinator at SF Department of the Environment, in February, hosted 50 attendees.

Goals & Challenges

We seek to build on the successes of these richly rewarding and reciprocal relationships. Partnerships add new elements to our work and convey practical actions the public can take to mitigate biodiversity loss and climate change. We’ve seen increased awareness and desire for public participation in all our programs. In 2023-2024, we plan to broaden outreach so that SF residents will plant more native species in their gardens, join our habitat stewardship work, understand the youth perspective on what’s happening environmentally, and advocate for Climate Action Plan funding and implementation. All of these measures require coordination and designated staff and volunteer time.

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