



**Metro
Blooms**
GROW. BLOOM. INSPIRE!

2022–2025
Strategic Plan

METRO BLOOMS STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

With an overarching goal of transforming the organization to sustain growth, eight focus areas with accompanying strategic initiatives will guide Metro Blooms’ work for the next four years.

Mission	Vision
<p>Metro Blooms partners with communities to create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds, embracing the values of equity and inclusion to solve environmental challenges.</p>	<p>Engage communities to create resilient landscapes.</p>

Our Core Values

<p>Ecological Health</p> <p>Promote ecological health and function of our land and water resources to address and mitigate the effects of climate change and other environmental challenges.</p>	<p>Environmental Justice</p> <p>Promote fair and meaningful public involvement grounded in principles of equity, empowerment, and inclusion to ensure a shared environmental legacy.</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Increase public awareness, empowerment, and engagement. Develop and provide accessible educational programs and resources to create resilient landscapes and maintenance practices, supported by research.</p>	<p>Inspiration</p> <p>Encourage innovation, bring enthusiasm, and share knowledge of native landscapes.</p>	<p>Community Relations and Partnership</p> <p>Engage all voices to cultivate meaningful involvement with community stakeholders to build trust and foster commitment.</p>
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Equity

We work to create the conditions for all of a community’s members to be meaningfully involved in projects to protect clean water and create habitat. We perform our work using principles of equitable engagement and environmental justice so that those most impacted have the opportunity to take part in the decision-making. We intentionally reach out in underserved communities that include — but are not limited to — people of color, lower-income neighborhoods, and affordable housing communities.

Overview

The Board and staff participated in an extensive strategic planning and financial analysis process to develop the following strategic plan, which refreshes the strategic plan approved in 2017. Since the previous plan was approved, the organization has grown considerably with the purchase of a building in July 2020 and the addition of two additional entities. To begin this strategic plan refresh, the Board, with staff input, revised and updated the mission, vision and values for Metro Blooms. Propel Nonprofits, along with a Metro Blooms Strategic Action Team (SAT), facilitated the completion of an environmental scan consisting of a situational analysis, infrastructure needs analysis, and stakeholder input and two in-person retreat sessions. Five strategic areas of focus framed the retreat work completed by staff and Board members. They identified desired outcomes and anticipated activities that informed the development of the strategic initiatives and strategies presented in this Strategic Plan.

Strategic Framework

This plan is structured with a strategic framework that provides future direction and strategies for focus areas. This framework is intended to be adaptive, guiding the direction of the organization, without over-prescribing the specific activities or metrics to arrive at the desired future state. Given the unknowns in the sector, this framework provides direction while allowing for agility and responsiveness.

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic initiatives are organized within these focus areas and include strategies that will coordinate activities taking place over the next four years. This plan does not include any tactics or specific activities that could fall under each of the strategies. Specific tactics or activities are developed and linked to this strategic plan through organizational work plans – ideally for each strategic initiative so those work plans align with this strategic framework.

Through ongoing robust conversations over the past three months, grounded in the evolution of Metro Blooms and its entities, eight focus areas emerged to guide strategy development.

STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

- 1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
- 2. Partnerships in Community – Strong Interconnected Partnerships**
- 3. Education and Community Resources**
- 4. Design + Build for Healthy Resilient Lands and Water**
- 5. Community Relations, Engagement, and Inspiration**
- 6. Financial Sustainability and Accountability**
- 7. Organizational Identities and Interconnections**
- 8. Broaden Geographic Reach**

With these focus areas as a framework, staff and Board identified strategic initiatives along with specific strategies to achieve each strategic initiative. Subsequent to Board approval, the staff and Board will identify specific activities to achieve desired outcome metrics to assess achievement of the strategic initiatives. These will be linked through organizational and Board work plans. Each focus area is hereby presented along with its strategic initiatives and strategies.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Integrate an equity framework grounded in transparency, responsiveness and accountability into organizational operations and program offerings to better reach and serve diverse communities.

Strategic Initiative: Expand representation on the Board so that by year end 2022, there is a majority of individuals not previously represented, including but not limited to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ membership.

1. **Strategy One:** Expand the size of the Board to facilitate cohort recruitment and maintain current Board members.
2. **Strategy Two:** Reduce barriers to participation by historically excluded populations including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities.
3. **Strategy Three:** Create clearly defined development plan and accountability measures for expanded Board development.

Strategic Initiative: Offer accessible and relevant projects and services to diverse communities.

1. **Strategy One:** Ensure the inclusion of community input into developing and evaluating projects and services.
2. **Strategy Two:** Reduce barriers to participation by historically excluded populations including BIPOC, persons with disabilities, low-income, renters and non-gardeners.
3. **Strategy Three:** Bridge language barriers. Develop accessible and culturally relevant educational and promotional materials in multiple languages to be shared through a range of communications channels, including those that support oral traditions.
4. **Strategy Four:** Develop and implement a plan to identify and expand our social media platforms to reach diverse audiences.
5. **Strategy Five:** Commit adequate personnel and financial resources to equity framework development, implementation, and accountability practices.

Strategic Initiative: Advance environmental justice through authentic partnerships and by leveraging organizational resources.

1. **Strategy One:** Amplify the important work of communities and organizations toward justice and equity through existing organizational resources.
2. **Strategy Two:** Strengthen engagement with communities and organizations working toward environmental justice and equity in alignment with Metro Blooms' mission.
3. **Strategy Three:** Diversify staff to accurately reflect the communities we serve.

PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY- STRONG INTERCONNECTED PARTNERSHIPS

Solidify our position as a community partner through deepening relationships and by remaining responsive to existing and emerging needs.

Strategic Initiative: Build and strengthen relationships with partners that advance Metro Blooms' mission and align with organizational values.

1. **Strategy One:** Assess current partnerships to develop stewardship practices that strengthen and build mutually supportive relationships.
2. **Strategy Two:** Identify and prioritize prospective traditional and non-traditional partnerships to cultivate relationships through mutual goals.
3. **Strategy Three:** Increase familiarity with Metro Blooms and our projects and services through educational workshops, informational sessions, and community events.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds in neighborhoods and communities.

Strategic Initiative: Offer education and outreach to DIY property owners and renters.

1. **Strategy One:** Offer Resilient Landscapes Workshops with design, technical assistance, and project-based learning pods.
2. **Strategy Two:** Create new content, provide multiple language options, and examine processes for cross-cultural accessibility of our workshops.
3. **Strategy Three:** Articulate clear steps in the relationship-building aspect of the workshop program using the project coaching model to be the partner and guide from learning to completion.
4. **Strategy Four:** Collect and incorporate evaluation data and feedback for continuous improvement.

Strategic Initiative: Expand access to quality professionals who are prepared to maintain green infrastructure.

1. **Strategy One:** Offer online and hands-on sustainable landcare (SLC) training programs and on-the-job training and apprenticeships to youth, young adults and early career professionals focusing on equitable access.
2. **Strategy Two:** Offer self-sustaining SLC professional development programs for maintenance of green infrastructures to local governments, commercial and institutional campuses, and multi-family housing sites.

Strategic Initiative: Provide a fully supported Blue Thumb partnership to maintain existing and renewing partners.

1. **Strategy One:** Expand staffing to support the Blue Thumb program.
2. **Strategy Two:** Articulate clear steps in relationship-building for the Blue Thumb partnership with increased connectivity and communications.
3. **Strategy Three:** Develop criteria for expansion that considers relationships and strategic partnerships and fosters potential funding as a way to prioritize expansion.
4. **Strategy Four:** Develop a transition plan for the Blue Thumb program to meet our contractual obligations to the Rice Creek Watershed District, and continuation of the program following the transfer of ownership.

DESIGN + BUILD FOR HEALTHY RESILIENT LANDS AND WATER

Develop the Design + Build program to support design, installation, maintenance, and reporting services to overcome barriers to the installation and care of resilient landscapes and to provide financial support to Metro Blooms.

Strategic Initiative: Build our reputation and brand as a highly qualified design, build, and landcare services organization that is focused on sustainable and resilient landscapes.

1. **Strategy One:** Develop and implement a marketing strategy to build a respected brand that illustrates quality and design in line with Metro Blooms' mission.
2. **Strategy Two:** Ensure oversight and quality control to meet our highest standards.
3. **Strategy Three:** Invest in the right equipment for the job and maintain our equipment to reflect attention to detail based on high expectations for all staff.
4. **Strategy Four:** Build efficiencies into our procurement and oversight processes.
5. **Strategy Five:** Invest in our staff by offering competitive wages and benefits, as well as training and advancement for the development of expert staff.
6. **Strategy Six:** Maintain designers and crew leaders across the seasons.

Strategic Initiative: Change social norms through education, design, and technical assistance.

1. **Strategy One:** Increase access to high-quality resilient landscape services through partnerships with community organizations.
2. **Strategy Two:** Assist partners in securing funding resources.
3. **Strategy Three:** Partner with Metro Blooms on engagement-focused projects.

Strategic Initiative: Build a professional landcare program to meet the need for qualified stormwater best management practices (BMP) and native plant care.

1. **Strategy One:** Identify and reach out to environmental justice and high-impact environmental projects, such as opportunities available within local governments and larger commercial and institutional properties that share our values.
2. **Strategy Two:** Secure multi-year contracts to support the landcare program and the financial stability of the organization.
3. **Strategy Three:** Seamlessly integrate with Metro Blooms' Sustainable Landcare Training program to create career pathways to jobs in the environmental field.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS, ENGAGEMENT, AND INSPIRATION

With relationships as a core value, nurture trust and honor passionate commitment. Encourage innovation, bring enthusiasm, and share knowledge of native landscapes. Engage all voices to cultivate meaningful involvement with community stakeholders to build trust and foster commitment.

Strategic Initiative: Expand and nurture healthy relationships with each other and with communities across our diverse and intersectional identities.

1. **Strategy One:** Foster collective growth in understanding resilient and regenerative practices with cooperative partnerships and knowledge sharing by honoring the needs of people we work with.

2. **Strategy Two:** Honor wisdom traditions regarding plant and self-care to increase adoption and stewardship of native plants.
3. **Strategy Three:** Honor identity as determined by self. Support the practice of using pronouns in our introductions.

Strategic Initiative: Prioritize fund development to support professional development for new green workforce and to encourage resident skills for onsite landcare with line-item considerations in contracts and grants.

1. **Strategy One:** Provide paid apprenticeships with mentors for young adults as a working model.
2. **Strategy Two:** Provide paid work opportunities, on-the-job professional development, and local stewardship for residents through project-based models.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Develop goals and benchmarks for long-term financial sustainability for Metro Blooms and its entities.

Strategic Initiative: Increase the diversity of income to strengthen the long-term financial health of Metro Blooms.

1. **Strategy One:** Explore and implement revenue-generating strategies and activities for increased unrestricted income.
2. **Strategy Two:** Seek and secure a diversity of contracts with a range of vendors including city, county, and state government as well as nonprofit and for-profit corporations.

Strategic Initiative: Establish transparent financial systems and practices that support goals and are indicators of financial and organizational sustainability and accountability.

1. **Strategy One:** Determine indicators of financial health for all entities, programs and services that are realistic and viable.
2. **Strategy Two:** Solidify the financial relationships between and among Metro Blooms, Metro Blooms Design + Build and Metro Blooms Property, LLC, with corresponding tracking and monitoring systems.
3. **Strategy Three:** Assess organizational structure and staff needs to ensure that adequate resources are available to support programs.

Strategic Initiative: Complete annual fund development plans to support the goals and outcomes of Metro Blooms.

1. **Strategy One:** Develop annual fundraising goals to support program and operational expenses and goals for growth.
2. **Strategy Two:** Determine revenue goals by various funding sources.
3. **Strategy Three:** Ensure success in fundraising with adequate staff and other resources for cultivating and stewarding relationships with donors.
4. **Strategy Four:** Establish a multi-year approach to develop and grow a reserve fund.

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITIES AND INTERCONNECTIONS

Assess and clarify the organizational structure and culture to develop viable systems, processes, and practices.

Strategic Initiative: Outline and articulate governance structures that support the unique purpose and interconnectedness among the entities of Metro Blooms.

1. **Strategy One:** Update Metro Blooms Bylaws to reflect best practices in governance for our current structure and inter-organizational relationships.
2. **Strategy Two:** Review and update, as needed, the Metro Blooms Property governance structure.
3. **Strategy Three:** Continue to evolve the governance structure for Metro Blooms Design + Build that considers unique characteristics of the for-profit entity.

Strategic Initiative: Clarify the organizational structure consisting of Metro Blooms, Design + Build and Metro Blooms Property, LLC in alignment with mission and goals.

1. **Strategy One:** Assess and define the overall contribution and role of each entity in achieving mission and impact.
2. **Strategy Two:** Align strategies, financial goals, activities, and staff structure to organizational goals of each entity.
3. **Strategy Three:** Clarify the brand, logo and identities of each organization and key communication goals that promote our strengths and new initiatives.
4. **Strategy Four:** Make the connections between Metro Blooms and Blue Thumbs public and transparent.

Strategic Initiative: Create an organizational culture that is inclusive of Metro Blooms, Design + Build and Metro Blooms Property, LLC, and promotes core values.

1. **Strategy One:** Ensure staff, Board, volunteers, donors, and contractors have meaningful opportunities to inform and shape organizational culture and employee engagement.
2. **Strategy Two:** Develop and continually assess communication channels among the three entities to ensure effective coordination, informed decision-making, and shared understanding of organizational activities.

Strategic Initiative: Develop brand and marketing strategies to communicate organizational identities and interconnections.

1. **Strategy One:** Make the connection between Metro Blooms and Metro Blooms Design + Build public and transparent.
2. **Strategy Two:** Create website and media campaigns to expand awareness of and engagement with Metro Blooms programs locally and with Blue Thumb programs throughout the state.

Strategic Initiative: Establish a monitoring and program evaluation system to easily demonstrate progress toward goals.

1. **Strategy One:** Identify a program evaluation/monitoring job function for each Metro Blooms entity.
2. **Strategy Two:** Identify professional resources to guide the development of an integrated data collection and reporting system to support accountability and measure progress.
3. **Strategy Three:** Develop an evaluation dashboard to track major program goals throughout the year in alignment with the budget.

BROADEN GEOGRAPHIC REACH

Prioritize opportunities for geographic expansion to align with Metro Blooms' mission and values to reach new communities and partners.

Strategic Initiative: Leverage Metro Blooms' programs, such as Blue Thumb and the Lawns to Legumes Individual Support Program, to facilitate statewide expansion.

1. **Strategy One:** Develop criteria to inform a plan for prioritizing geographic expansion using existing and influential relationships.
2. **Strategy Two:** Identify and expand the type of partners and networks to enhance Metro Blooms' mission.
3. **Strategy Three:** Leverage the Lawns to Legumes program to build awareness of Blue Thumb and Metro Blooms statewide.

The Board of Directors approved this Strategic Plan December 15, 2021.

Metro Blooms

