



2024 Annual Report

Building a Sustainable Future Together



Letter from the Director



Dear Friends and Supporters of Bethesda Green,

What an incredible year we had! As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with gratitude for the collective dedication that has fueled Bethesda Green's success. Returning as Director two years ago, I have watched with pride as we've transitioned from stabilizing our foundation in 2023 to mobilizing our community in 2024—and now, we are positioned to maximize our impact even further in 2025.

Last year, Bethesda Green celebrated several milestones, including the reopening of our Incubator program and the partial renovation of our space. This space now serves as a hub for innovation, sustainability, and collaboration. It's a place where entrepreneurs, community leaders, and passionate advocates come together to create real, sustainable change.

The work we do is never easy, but it's always worth it. In a world facing increasing volatility, uncertainty and complexity—our commitment to sustainability offers a bright path forward. Our programs are more than just initiatives; they are calls to action for businesses, individuals, and organizations to embrace their role in shaping a greener, more resilient future.

Together, we've built a foundation of cooperation, commitment, resilience, and hope. Our team has worked relentlessly to ensure that the vision of a sustainable, thriving world is within reach.

None of this would be possible without you—our dedicated board members, staff, volunteers, donors, partners, and supporters. Each of you plays an essential role in making Bethesda Green a success, and for that, I thank you.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible team behind our success. Emily Bernard leads our entrepreneur and incubator activities; Sharon D'Emidio, drives our Green Living and Community Engagement; Pia Iolster has brought her expertise to the Green Business Certification program; and Rachel Weisz oversees our Food Working Group. Each one of them is dedicated to our mission, and their hard work continues to inspire and move us forward.

As we look to 2025, we remain steadfast in our commitment to driving change, innovating solutions, and creating a lasting impact on the environment and our communities. We're excited to continue this journey with all of you.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Feldman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and is followed by a horizontal line.

Dave Feldman
Executive Director, Bethesda Green

Incubator

2024 marked a pivotal year for our Incubator, as we successfully relaunched the program with a new, community-driven model. The pandemic taught us the importance of fostering a strong network for entrepreneurs who are committed to sustainability. The Incubator's restructured model is designed to build lasting relationships, encourage knowledge sharing, and provide tailored support to entrepreneurs at every stage of their business journey.

We are proud to have supported 10 amazing companies this year, each of which is making significant strides in their respective industries. These businesses are not just aiming for profit—they're working to solve some of the world's most pressing sustainability challenges. Our companies include:

- **AvosBio** – Harnessing the power of bamboo for bioenergy, creating jobs in economically disadvantaged communities.
- **Gardenology** – Innovating sustainable landscaping practices, ensuring eco-friendly gardening solutions.
- **Good Idea Solar** – Helping small family farms transition to solar farming, boosting profitability and providing clean energy to communities.
- **Willow Green** – Offering eco-conscious funeral services that allow families to honor their loved ones without harming the Earth.
- **Green Mechanics** – Creating nature-based solutions to reduce operational costs and promote environmental responsibility.
- **Greenwood Burial Company** – Leading the way in sustainable burial practices, offering natural burial options and memorial services.
- **H2O Connected** – Developing water-saving devices to reduce waste and save money while lowering greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Next Generation Inc.** – Training and empowering BIPOC and women for careers in the clean energy sector, meeting the industry's urgent needs.
- **Tribal Energy Development** – Supporting Tribal nations with clean energy projects, boosting economic growth and energy resilience.
- **Upling** – Providing a much-needed service by delivering cannabis in a safe, sustainable, and accessible way to veterans and those with disabilities.



Throughout the year, we hosted numerous events to support our entrepreneurs:

- **Monthly Entrepreneur Roundtables** – A space for entrepreneurs to share challenges and successes, learn from each other, and build a supportive community.
- **Bi-monthly Speaker Workshops** – These workshops offered valuable resources and insights from experts on a range of topics essential to growing a successful business.
- **Summer Speaker Series** – Featuring in-depth conversations on trending sustainability topics, such as advancing solar energy and environmental justice, with our Incubator members leading the way.
- **Mentor Office Hours** – These sessions allowed our entrepreneurs to receive one-on-one support from experienced mentors, offering personalized advice that's been critical to their success.

Each of the businesses are also supported by dedicated mentor groups, ensuring entrepreneurs receive guidance tailored to their specific needs. One of our proudest accomplishments this year was our **Entrepreneur Showcase** hosted in January 2025. The event was the culmination of months of hard work and preparation, where these entrepreneurs had the opportunity to present their businesses to investors, partners, and the wider community.

Green Business Certification

The Green Business Certification program, launched in April 2024, has been one of the most exciting and rewarding initiatives of the year. In collaboration with Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection, this program recognizes businesses for their dedication to implementing sustainable practices and making a measurable impact on the environment.

In just the first year, we certified 16 local businesses, each of which is contributing to a greener, more sustainable community. These businesses are now proudly displaying their certification badges, showcasing their commitment to sustainability, and inspiring others to follow suit.

The certification process provides businesses with a clear framework to assess and improve their environmental impact. By tracking a multitude of initiatives, businesses accumulate points that lead to certification at various levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum). This process not only helps businesses improve but also aligns them with a community of like-minded organizations.

To celebrate their success, we are excited to announce that the logos of 16 businesses will be featured in a month-long **Ride On Bus campaign** in early 2025, further promoting their commitment to sustainability across the county.

Looking ahead, we're committed to growing the program in 2025, expanding outreach, and supporting more businesses in their sustainability journeys. Our goal is to create a network of green-certified businesses that not only operate sustainably, but also inspire others to do the same.



Get Started Today!

Become Green Business Certified and join a leadership movement committed to a sustainable future.



Green Living

Our Green Living initiatives have continued to make a tangible impact on the community this year. These programs focus on engaging individuals, neighborhoods, and local organizations in sustainable practices that improve the environment and quality of life. Here's a look at some of the highlights from 2024:

- **Kensington Mews Project:** We partnered with the Kensington Mews community to restore their shared courtyard and address stormwater runoff issues. This project is about more than just beautification—it's about building a space that encourages community engagement while protecting the environment. The project will be completed in 2025 and will create a more resilient, sustainable space for residents to enjoy.
- **Pollinator Gardens:** This year, we planted a new pollinator garden at the National Center for Children & Families in Bethesda. The garden supports local pollinators, including bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, and is a testament to the power of community engagement in creating sustainable green spaces.
- **Clothing Donation Drive:** Partnering with Walt Whitman High School's Sustainability Club, we organized a clothing donation drive to combat the environmental impact of fast fashion. This event will help reduce textile waste and promote more sustainable consumption habits in the community.

These projects are just the beginning. In 2025, we will continue to expand our Green Living initiatives, engaging more people in sustainable practices and helping build a more resilient, eco-friendly community.



Food Working Group

Bethesda Green's **Sustainable Food Systems Working Group**, launched in July 2024, has brought together a diverse group of stakeholders—from local food assistance providers to sustainability-focused businesses—to discuss and address the challenges facing our regional food system. Our goal is to create a more sustainable, resilient food system in Montgomery County and beyond.

In 2024, we identified three key areas of focus:

1. **Increasing Local Food Procurement:** We're working to facilitate long-term institutional purchasing of regionally produced food, benefitting local farmers and creating a more resilient and sustainable food supply chain. We have several grants outstanding to move this initiative forward.
2. **Reducing Food Waste:** We've partnered with local organizations to reduce food waste and divert what remains to composting and recycling. This initiative helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and creates more sustainable food systems.
3. **Promoting Sustainably Grown Food:** We are exploring ways to engage the community around sustainably grown and produced food products, including plans to support the process of bringing a Naturally Network Chapter to the DC metro area in 2025.

Through this work, we aim to create a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food system that serves everyone in our community.

Innovation Center and Shared Office Space

The Innovation Center was revitalized in 2024 and is now a key component of Bethesda Green's mission. This dynamic, eco-friendly space serves as a hub for sustainability-focused entrepreneurs, thought leaders, and community members to collaborate, innovate, and drive change.

In 2024, the Innovation Center supported dozens of programs, including:

- Networking events and collaborative workshops that bring together green businesses and community leaders.
- High-impact presentations and seminars focused on pressing environmental and social issues.
- Celebrations of the achievements of our green business leaders, sponsors, and partners.

We plan to expand the design and offerings, including a living green wall that will serve as a focal point of beauty and sustainability, educational displays and interactive kiosks that inform visitors about sustainable practices and local pop-ups and art exhibits that showcase the best of sustainable products and practices in our region.

Looking Ahead

Bethesda Green is more committed than ever to driving meaningful change. We will continue to expand our programs, engage our community, and build stronger partnerships to foster sustainability in every corner of our region.

We will continue to be a place where sustainability is discussed and experienced, a place where new ideas are born, collaborations are formed, and real, lasting change is made.

We're looking forward to further tackling the biggest challenges facing our planet. Together, we will create a future that is not only sustainable but thriving, vibrant, and full of promise.

“Together, we will create a future that is sustainable, thriving, and full of promise.”



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www.bethesdagreen.org.