

2024

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION REPORT

urban
matters



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MESSAGE FROM COMPANY LEADERS

Dear Friends, Partners, and Community Members,

As we reflect on this past year, we are filled with gratitude for the resilience and dedication shown by our team, community partners, and clients. It's been a year marked by rapid growth and exciting collaborations, as well as meaningful conversations about ongoing complex challenges in our society. We are grateful for the year we have had and are thrilled to share a few highlights in this report.

Notably this year, we celebrated 10 years as a Community Contribution Company! We are extremely proud of our team who has consistently demonstrated unwavering commitment, agility, and focus. Not only that, but doing so with the courage and vision needed to see beyond any current roadblocks. Thanks to this collective strength, we've been able to deliver lasting value to our clients and communities, and we couldn't be more proud of what we've achieved together.

Just as importantly, we are thankful for the trust and collaboration we share with our clients that form the foundation for achieving meaningful outcomes together. It is through these relationships that we have been given the opportunity to explore and advance solutions, such as working with Aseniwuche Winewak Nation in Alberta to create their first ever citizenship code, supporting the City of Maple Ridge to evolve its approach to community safety and well-being, or working alongside communities on their accessibility planning, to name just a few. We are grateful for the partnerships, dedication, and trust of our clients.

We also continue to enjoy close ties and connections with our parent company Urban Systems, and continuously mix talent and skills from both companies to form interdisciplinary teams. For example, we have combined our strengths in housing policy and land economics to test the impacts of policy levers on potential affordability measures. We have also collaborated with Urban's landscape design professionals to help us imagine the form and character of integrated mixed use social service hubs. We are grateful for their continued support and participation in service of our "North Star."

We trust that growth, collaboration, and impact will guide us through the year ahead.

Warmest regards,



Erin Welk, CEO



Jade Arignon, CEO

Dylan Houlihan, Board Chair



Urban Matters 10 year anniversary gathering in November, 2024

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Over the past decade, we have had the privilege of working alongside incredible clients, community partners, and changemakers. In 2024, we were grateful to celebrate our 10-year anniversary! To celebrate, we held a small gathering with colleagues, clients, and community partners in Kelowna, B.C. in November 2024.

As we mark this significant milestone, we celebrate not just our professional achievements, but the incredible relationships that have supported us along the way. We know that it is these relationships that spark and sustain impact, because behind every successful project or initiative is a network of dedicated people and organizations who share our same goal – to create inclusive communities where everyone has opportunity to thrive.



**TOTAL
PROJECTS** **85**
STARTED IN 2024

17
TEAM MEMBERS




90%
Relationship-based
consulting

10%
Sourced through
procurement.

Majority of 2024 work took place in **Lower Mainland (BC)** and **Thompson-Okanagan (BC)**.

**Municipal
partners make
up nearly**

50%
**of active
projects.**

Other project partners
include:

- ▶ First Nations
- ▶ Federal + Provincial Government
- ▶ Non-Profits
- ▶ Education/Health Organizations



13

**Indigenous Wellbeing
projects** – Includes First
Nations and community
projects led by Indigenous
practitioners



3

**Accessibility
projects** – To
identify, remove, and
prevent barriers to
accessibility



13

Housing Needs Reports
from communities with
populations ranging from
<2k to >600k



4

**Staff Housing Needs
projects** – Completed or
ongoing in mountain towns



5

Community Action Teams (CATs)
– Support facilitation of Central
Okanagan, Penticton, Merritt, Fort
St. John, and Vernon
(HART Team)

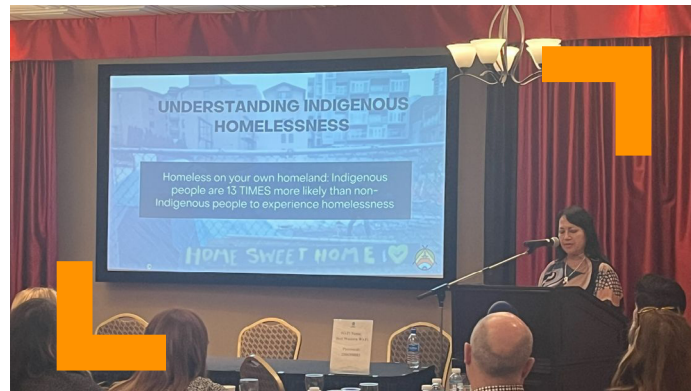
PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

HOUSING

Housing continues to be one of the most pressing social and economic challenges of our time. Communities across Canada are grappling with a housing crisis that has far-reaching implications for affordability, availability, and overall quality of life. Rising housing costs are impacting low and middle-income earners, straining local economies, and reshaping the social fabric of neighborhoods. This strain is being felt by everyone, creating an urgent need for innovative, community-driven solutions.

Projects include:

- ▶ **New Westminster Housing Needs Report:** Building on our experience developing Housing Needs Reports for more than 60 communities over the past five years, we supported the City of New Westminster in applying a social and equity lens to identify the housing needs of specific equity-deserving groups. We also prepared tenure, affordability, and bedroom number breakdowns to help the City track if their new housing supply is aligned with their housing needs.
- ▶ **Metro Vancouver Purpose-Built Rental Guide:** Our team supported Metro Vancouver to update its What Works guide for purpose-built rental incentives. The best practice guide reflects current challenges, barriers, and opportunities for purpose-built rental housing in the region. The guide can be used by decision-makers, planners, and advocates to understand the importance of supportive tools and incentives for new or existing purpose-built rental housing.
- ▶ **Kelowna Housing Strategy:** Our team worked with the City of Kelowna to create a new Housing Action Plan that emphasizes systems planning, collaboration, and coordination to develop solutions across the Housing Wheelhouse. This project included financial testing to review the City's existing housing incentive programs and proposed recommendations aimed at accelerating Kelowna's housing development potential.



By fostering strong partnerships with local governments, Indigenous communities, non-profits, and housing providers, we have been able to help communities identify innovative approaches to housing, such as increasing density in single-family neighborhoods, supporting non-market housing development, and incorporating diverse housing forms into long-term plans. In 2025 and beyond, we will continue to be committed to working alongside communities to tackle these challenges and address housing gaps through meaningful collaboration, informed decision-making, and a shared vision for vibrant, inclusive neighborhoods.

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Recently, our team at Urban Matters hit a significant milestone in an ongoing project with Aseniwuche Winewak Nation (AWN) to create their first ever citizenship code – a legal framework that sets the rules and guidelines around who is considered a citizen within a specific community. Citizenship codes are commonly used by First Nation communities to define eligibility criteria that is typically based on lineage, ancestry, or adoption practices. Each community's code is tailored to their unique history and traditions, and helps to ensure their Indigenous rights are protected.

After four years of hard work alongside the Nation and its community members, the code took a great step forward in November 2024, reaching a 94 per cent approval vote in the face of significant social, legal, and cultural complexities.

Historically, the Nation – located in northern Alberta – held no status or treaty rights, instead operating as a non-profit society. While this allowed them to access certain benefits available to non-profits, it also meant there were limitations in their ability to establish self-governance as a First Nation band under the federal Indian Act.

“This process took a long time and a lot of hard work,” says project leader Brent Wellsch. “Working group members and the Nation’s president himself were out there communicating with community that this code was a means to something much bigger.”

This work began in 2018, guided by the vision and leadership of the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge at the University of Alberta. After significant initial support by the Lodge, Brent and planner Tonii Lerat were invited to continue the work in Fall 2020. With a need to reflect and represent the whole community, the duo pursued a highly collaborative approach that would involve each community member as much as possible in the education, discussion, and decision-making of the project. Together with the community, they worked through nearly 10 complex themes and categories, such as marriage, divorce, and dual membership.

However, Brent and Tonii also recognized that there were certain aspects of the project that were beyond their influence as external advisors to the community. Instead, they approached these aspects with cultural humility, acknowledging that some conversations required relationships and perspectives that local leaders are best positioned to do.

“There were many community champions that would go door-to-door to talk to people who hadn’t attended the meetings to help explain why voting on the code was important,” Brent says. “You need this kind of grassroots activism to make these projects happen; it’s an integral part of other projects we always work on. If you build with this grassroots energy, there isn’t tension of a top-down approach.”

Although the project has not yet concluded, the majority favour vote of the citizenship code reflected the value of the extensive engagement and consultation efforts necessary to its development and resulting approval rate. The experience has brought critical insights into systemic challenges facing non-status Indigenous communities across Canada, as well as a reinforced understanding of the importance behind building understanding, trust, and relationships among Indigenous communities.



THE ROAD AHEAD



The social development sector is a dynamic landscape, constantly responding to evolving societal needs and challenges. Our work has revealed several powerful shifts happening across communities. While many have made significant strides across various areas of social development, we are also facing increasingly complex hurdles that require innovative solutions and a more holistic approach.

These ongoing changes point towards a future where communities must be more agile, collaborative, and adaptive than ever before. Here are some key trends and evolutions we are observing:

- ▶ **Housing** – Housing remains a pivotal issue within communities. While communities are making significant progress in updating their housing needs assessments, the current economic climate continues to present unique challenges. Specifically, dropping interest rates have not been enough to offset the high cost of construction and the scarcity of labour, making it challenging to build more attainable housing. New opportunities like infill and modular are not being realized, and much of our work is focused on how to catalyze these opportunities and unlock their potential. At the same time, local governments retain considerable influence over policies and programs that can mitigate these pressures. We are actively collaborating with municipalities to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and implement monitoring frameworks that provide real-time data analysis to help communities adapt to changing conditions.
- ▶ **Non-profits** – The non-profit sector is experiencing a surge in demand while grappling with capacity constraints. We're witnessing an increase in requests across the board – from food banks struggling to keep up, to mental health services that are overwhelmed by demand. Non-profits understand the challenges at the local level and bring considerable expertise in collaboration and partnership, yet are often siloed by funding constraints. The potential for leveraging collaboration with all levels of government, business, health, and the justice system is not yet fully realized. There is opportunity to support the capacity of the sector to reach beyond their stretched capacity, but this
- requires a combination of aligned and flexible funding that supports and values collaboration. It also often requires facilitated support for collaborative processes to help foster the creative and innovative problem-solving that arises from chaos and constraints, turning challenges into opportunities.
- ▶ **Truth and Reconciliation** – There is growing recognition across all levels of governments of the need for truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities. However, there remains a significant gap between this appetite for change and a clear understanding of how best to achieve it. While many municipalities want to engage in meaningful consultation, Indigenous communities are struggling to keep pace with requests for support and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, Indigenous communities seek reconciliation that is rooted in a deep understanding of history and a commitment to long-term trust building as opposed to one-time collaborations or outreach. This includes a much-needed shift from reactive crisis management to proactive policy development, and upstream investments that are crucial to building trust and empowering Indigenous communities to lead the process of healing and reconciliation.
- ▶ **Equity and Inclusion** – There is growing tension in the political realm around approaches to inclusion. For example, legislated requirements to improve accessibility are intended to facilitate access to services in a way that accommodate a variety of differences and experiences. This progress reflects a growing understanding that everyone deserves equal opportunities and a sense of belonging. At the same time however, ideological tensions are creating an increasingly challenging environment to implement these strategies and measures. Continuing to move equity and inclusion forward in communities will require significant collaborative approaches at the community and government levels. There is a need to move beyond the polarizing rhetoric, listen deeply, and seek common values to find alignment. Supporting this type of bridge building will be important to continue to support and encourage communities to embed equity and inclusion in grassroots, community-led initiatives.

► **Role of local government** – Over the past decade, local governments have increasingly taken on social development as a function. This has focused on addressing community well-being, and on attempts to integrate health and housing functions to address social issues. In recent years, there has been significant public concern about community safety, which is increasing the expectation to involve the justice system. There is a growing recognition that while traditional systems of enforcement are necessary, they are not enough nor are they designed to respond to the complexity currently experienced by communities. At the local level, we are seeing bylaw departments working more closely with housing and health systems. For example, pairing enforcement responses with trauma-informed supports – such as access to mental health professionals, substance use treatment programs, and stable housing options – can address the underlying causes and empower individuals on their healing journeys. There are also some examples of approaches that involve people with lived experience in the responses. As local governments grapple with their role in this work, the need for increased integration and collaboration with other sectors is emerging. This integrated approach aims to be more effective in addressing complex social challenges by ensuring that health, housing, and justice systems work together more seamlessly.

Overall, we are witnessing an increasing complexity of social challenges and dynamics in our communities and across the systems in which we work. Now, more than ever, we must listen intently, collaborate openly, and work together to create meaningful solutions. It is also equally important to channel our passion into action in order to move beyond discussion and effect real change. We truly believe that every individual, every community, possesses the power to make a difference.

In addition to our community consulting work, Urban Matters is also committed to supporting organizations and initiatives that are seeking out innovative ways to address the challenges within communities through our annual Community Contributions. As we strive to create resilient and inclusive communities, we are more committed than ever to support communities in the ups and downs and complexities of social development.



2023 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION REFLECTIONS

As one of Canada's first Community Contribution Companies, we direct a significant portion of our profits every year to support community-led initiatives. Since 2016, we have contributed \$1,025,000 back into communities!

As our organization matures and grows in scale, we have seen our profits expand, and with them, the resources we can allocate to this annual contribution process. This growth has not only allowed us to support a broader range of projects but has also deepened our understanding of how to manage our contributions for maximum effectiveness.

One of our core principles has always been to go beyond charitable donations and instead focus on initiatives that drive long-term systems change. Over the last few years, we have continued to refine our processes to ensure that every dollar invested creates meaningful, sustainable impact. Among the key lessons we have learned include:

- ▶ **Strategic alignment:** We are getting clearer about which community initiatives align most closely with our mission, values, and goals – creating the synergy required to amplify our impact.
- ▶ **Internal champions:** We've found that having a dedicated internal champion is critical to driving initiatives forward. Our team members are able to foster deep relationships with community partners and ensure momentum throughout the process.
- ▶ **Trust and accountability:** Our trust-based philanthropic approach empowers community organizations to innovate and lead. However, it requires careful attention to establish and maintain the right level of accountability to ensure goals are met without hindering creativity.

We recognize that supporting systemic change is a long-term journey, requiring adaptability and a willingness to learn. With each passing year, our commitment grows stronger, and our strategies grow sharper, thanks to the invaluable lessons gained along the way.





2024 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Our team is thrilled to announce the recipients of our latest round of community contributions! This year, our contributions total \$290,000, going towards projects and organizations that support people with lived and living experience through social finance, research projects, and supportive services. Our latest contributions focus on both continuing our partnerships with organizations we've supported in the past and exploring new opportunities to create lasting change.

Two partnerships we're continuing from last year include:



COMMUNITY PARTNER:
New Power Labs



CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT:
\$110,000

New Power Labs (NPL) is dedicated to changing the future of capital for underfunded and overlooked communities and unlocking Canada's potential. They bring together investors, funders, asset managers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders to level the field for capital allocation across the diversity of Canada, with the goal of shifting \$500 million to underfunded leaders and communities by 2030.

Over the past year, Urban Matters and NPL have teamed up to design a fund that supports mother entrepreneurs with lived and living experience. This fund is designed to support entrepreneurial mothers who have faced life-changing challenges, such as housing instability, substance use, trauma, and systemic discrimination. The fund pairs flexible financing with comprehensive wraparound supports. In 2024, the work focused on validating the need and designing the fund together with mother entrepreneurs with lived experiences.

Key milestones from 2024 include:

- ▶ Conducting focus groups with entrepreneurial mothers across Vancouver, Edmonton, and London to ensure the fund design reflects their lived experiences.
- ▶ Designing recoverable grants and revenue-based financing tailored to mothers from underfunded communities, including Black, Indigenous, newcomer, and refugee mothers.
- ▶ Integrating mentorship, childcare, and mental health services into the fund's delivery model to address barriers unique to this demographic.
- ▶ Exploring localized implementation with partners.

In 2025, funding will support the NPL team to prepare to hire a fund manager, finalize legal structures and governance frameworks, expand partnerships, and work with investors to capitalize a \$5-million pilot launch.

newpowerlabs.org/entrepreneur-mothers-fund



2024 COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS



COMMUNITY PARTNER:
Employ to Empower




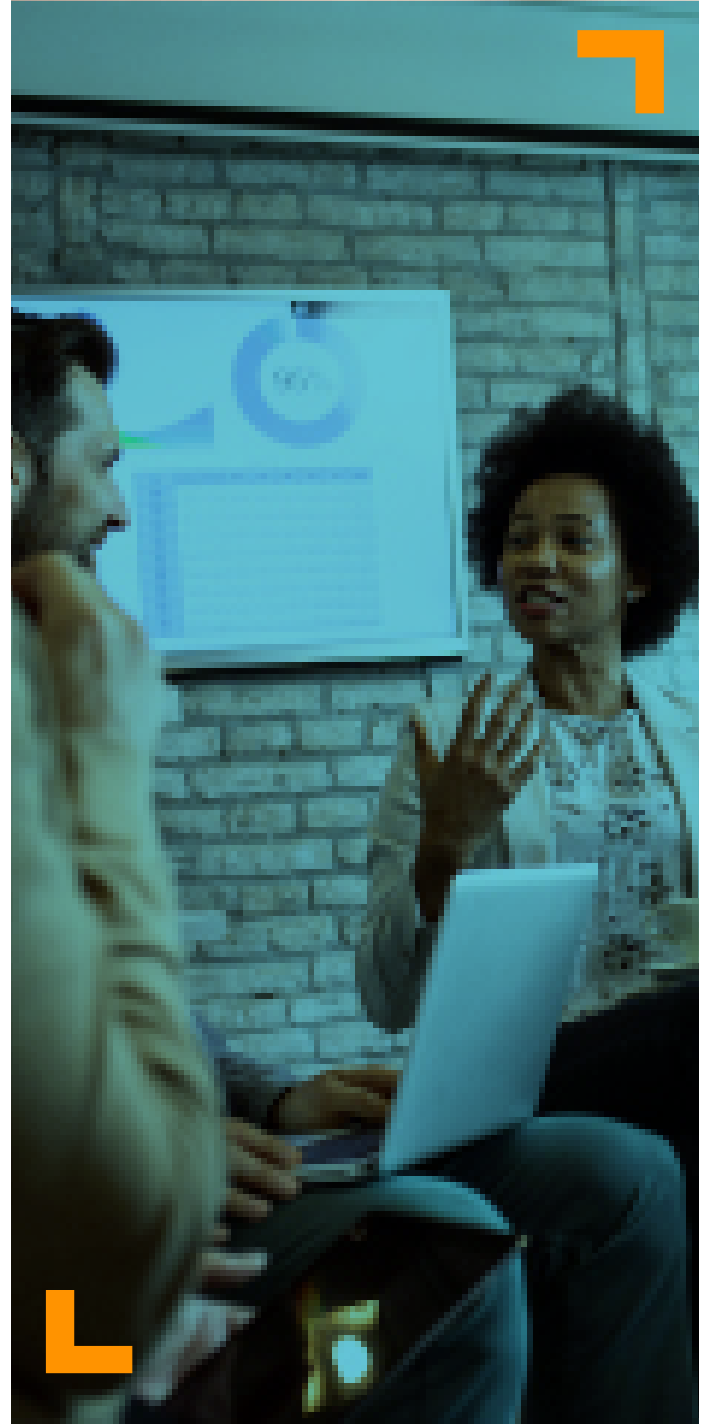
CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT:
\$55,000

Employ to Empower (ETE) is a Vancouver-based charity dedicated to breaking down barriers to employment through entrepreneurship. The organization empowers low-income individuals facing barriers such as mental health struggles, physical disabilities, and substance use recovery – providing them with the skills and resources to build sustainable futures.

Last year, funds from Urban Matters allowed ETE to empower 13 entrepreneurs, providing them with business fundamentals training, mentorship, and wraparound support. This year, Urban Matters is deepening its impact by empowering 18 individuals with lived or living experiences to take charge of their futures with purpose and pride.

This investment in time, talent, and financial support is fueling an ecosystem of free entrepreneurial resources, such as business skills training, mentorship, in-house counseling, workshops, the Smart Start program, monthly networking events, and paid leadership opportunities. Beyond funding, the funds will help to foster inclusion, accessibility, and long-term economic resilience.

 **WATCH VIDEO:** Learn more about Employ to Empower and how their holiday market “Make Change Market” in 2024 helped to boost the economic livelihood and confidence of 17 entrepreneurs, who made more than \$5,700 in sales.





We are also excited to announce our support for two new initiatives, which open fresh opportunities to address complex challenges:



COMMUNITY PARTNER:
AKSIS



CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT:
\$50,000

AKSIS, Edmonton's Indigenous Business & Professional Association, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting Indigenous businesses and professionals for the benefit of all Indigenous peoples. Its overarching purpose is to enhance the socio-economic standing of Indigenous communities in the greater Edmonton region, with a vision of establishing Edmonton as the Indigenous Business Capital of Canada.

With this year's contribution from Urban Matters, Aksis will be developing strategic communications and a campaign to promote the potential and capacity of Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs in the Edmonton area. A core focus of this work will be economic reconciliation — what it is, what it is not, and what it could look like in practice. The campaign will seek to shift narratives, raise awareness, and deepen understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities in supporting Indigenous economic growth.

Economic reconciliation is about more than participation: it requires meaningful investment in Indigenous-led business and entrepreneurship, removing systemic barriers, and ensuring Indigenous Peoples have access to equitable economic opportunities. This work will highlight the critical role of Indigenous businesses in strengthening local economies.

Urban Matters is thrilled to support AKSIS in advancing initiatives that drive meaningful action toward economic reconciliation within the Edmonton region. These efforts build on the themes, insights, and priorities identified at the Economic Reconciliation Symposium held in Edmonton in November 2024.



COMMUNITY PARTNER:
Dr. Peter Centre



CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT:
\$75,000

Based in Vancouver, Dr. Peter Center (DPC) is a non-profit healthcare organization dedicated to providing compassionate care and support to individuals living with complex health conditions such as HIV/AIDS, mental health challenges, substance use, and homelessness. Through a holistic approach that includes medical care, counseling, and therapeutic activities, the Centre continues to advocate for “the two percent” — those in our population who are sidelined by society — and offer a safe and inclusive environment for healing and connection.

Urban Matters is excited to support DPC to advance a partnership with the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centres Society (VAFCS) that will co-design trauma and violence informed responses. The work intends to provide community-based complex care supports to urban Indigenous people in a way that honours Indigenous self-determination.

At Urban Matters, we remain committed to listening, learning, and partnering with organizations that share our vision for systemic change. We are grateful to all our community partners for their dedication and are inspired by the important work they continue to do.

Stay tuned for updates on the progress of these initiatives. For more information about our approach to community contributions, visit

 [URBANMATTERS.CA/OUR-IMPACT](https://urbanmatters.ca/our-impact)

The Fine Print

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

With that comes our annual disclosure statements, in legal ease for clarity, and coincident with our 2024 fiscal year end (December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024). Every year, Urban Matters CCC must disclose:

- 1 The remuneration and position held of each person whose remuneration during that year was at least \$75,000, or, if there are more than 10 persons whose remuneration during that year was at least \$75 000, the remuneration and position held during that year of each of the 10 most highly remunerated persons.

URBAN MATTERS CCC HELD NO POSITIONS IN FISCAL 2024 FOR WHICH THE REMUNERATION EXCEEDED \$75,000.

- 2 The financial position of the company in that year.

URBAN MATTERS CCC'S NET-PROFIT, AFTER-TAX, FINANCIAL EARNINGS WERE: \$6,700.
SEE TABLES BELOW FOR A SUMMARY.

Statement of financial position (unaudited)

	2023	2024
ASSETS		
Current Assets	\$2,498,480	\$1,431,505
LIABILITIES + SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY		
Current Liabilities	\$1,945,049	\$871,374
Long-Term Debt	-	-
Shareholders' Equity	-	-
Share Capital (note 6)	12	12
Retained Earnings	\$553,419	\$560,131
	\$ 2,498,468	\$ 1,431,505

Statements of comprehensive income (unaudited)

	2023	2024
Revenue	\$4,653,816	\$4,803,378
Expenses	\$4,443,594	\$4,778,699
Earnings before Income Taxes	\$210,222	\$24,679
Income Taxes	\$63,515	\$17,979
Net Earnings	\$146,707	\$6,700
Retained Earnings, beginning of year	\$406,712	\$553,419
Retained earnings, end of year	\$553,419	\$560,119

- 3 The following information about dividends declared in relation to shares of classes or series of shares:

- i. For each of those classes and series of shares, the aggregate amount of the dividends declared in that year in relation to shares of that class or series of shares.
- ii. The identity of all entities that hold or beneficially own shares of that class or series of shares.

URBAN MATTERS CCC DID NOT DECLARE ANY DIVIDENDS IN FISCAL 2024.

- 4 The amounts transferred with a fair market value in excess of the prescribed amount, other than to a qualified entity, to persons who are related to the company or to any other persons unless the provision of that financial assistance is in furtherance of the company's community purposes.

URBAN MATTERS CCC DID NOT TRANSFER ANY SUCH MONEY OR OTHER ASSETS IN FISCAL 2024.