



# 2020 Annual Report



 **WALLS** PROJECT

[thewallsproject.org](http://thewallsproject.org)



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# Our Values & Outcomes

Since the beginning of the program in 2012, The Walls Project had reached many milestones through its programs of Baton Rouge: Community Farm at BREC Howell Park, Futures Fund, MLK Fest 2020, and #ONERouge.

Since 2012

- Generated \$3,000,000 for artists, tech professionals and teens
- Trained 2000+ underserved teens and adults in coding for the web and digital photography
- Produced 40,000+ servings of fresh food in 70805
- Transformed 125 buildings with murals and sculptural installations
- Reactivated 6 miles of blighted commercial corridors
- Cleared 180 tons of trash from streets and vacant
- Reactivated 6 miles of blighted commercial corridors

## Mission

- As observed in the resiliency and recovery routinely executed in the state, The Walls Project looked to help preserve and coordinate our community-driven program to address the most urgent needs presented by the pandemic and state shutdown. The Walls mission is to Enlight, Ignite and Unite communities to break through the Walls of Poverty. The overarching vision that guides

this work is to build a better and equitable world together. **WE THE PEOPLE** have a social contract to serve one another by tithing our time, talents and treasure. The Walls does this to empower communities, cultivate youth voice, grow good health, and create collective social impact through our programming and coalition work.

# The Pandemic Response

In March of 2020 the organization made the decision to pause our public art and volunteer community cleanups to focus all energies on alleviating food insecurity and unemployment in the Capital Region. With this surge in low-skill worker unemployment, the time was now to upskill residents for the jobs of the future – which will all involve technology as the economy moves more online. Industry workforce experts across the state identified technology training programs as a key investment for the post-COVID pandemic playbook for any business.

The pandemic also shined a light on how fragile the food system is and the health equity gap seen in North Baton Rouge. To address this disparity and mitigate potential disruption of the food supply chain the Baton Roots Community Farm expanded its farm production capacity to maximize our farm fresh food yield at BREC Howell Park, as well as expand to fourteen satellite farm production sites at EBR Public Housing Sites and high schools in North BR to grow food where people need it most.



Local stakeholders and community representatives join Mayor-President Sharon Weston-Broome at the opening of the Capitol High satellite Baton Roots farm.

## RESULTS MATTER!

The Walls Project has a track record of eight years of data-driven and proven outcomes. We did not create any new programs as a reaction to COVID. Rather as a strategic response, we expanded existing coding/IT training to adults, veterans, and OSY which all come with long-term self-sustaining revenue streams as well as maximizing our production capacity at current Baton Roots farm sites as well as adding staff to manage self-sustaining revenue streams. To ensure that vulnerable populations and recently low-skill dislocated workers can find employment and access to fresh food to our most food-insecure neighborhoods in the capital region during/post COVID response.



Casey Phillips  
Executive Director



Helena Williams  
Director of Operations



Mitchell Provensal  
Senior Program Coordinator  
Baton Root Community Farm at BREC  
Howell Park and satellite sites



Janel Washington  
Senior Program Coordinator  
The Futures Fund: Tech Academy & Coding Boot Camp



Shivonne Marshall  
Serve Louisiana  
Baton Root Community Farm at BREC  
Howell Park and satellite sites



Kellyn LaCour-Conant  
Farm Manager 2020  
Baton Root Community Farm at BREC  
Howell Park and satellite sites



Essence Birdsall  
Trainee Coordinator 2020  
The Futures Fund: Tech Academy & Coding Boot Camp



Dexter Jackson  
Program Cord. of Operations  
The Futures Fund: Tech Academy & Coding Boot Camp



Paul Franklin  
Culture Club Booking  
The Futures Fund: Tech Academy & Coding Boot Camp



Mary Bergeron  
Senior Grant Writer



Marci Bradley  
Development & Compliance

# The Team



**Rex Cabaniss**  
*Board President 2020*  
WHLC Architecture, Planning & Design  
Director



**Padma Vatsavai**  
*Board Vice President 2020*  
Vinformatix, CEO



**Monica Vela-Vick**  
*Board Secretary 2020*  
Phelps Dunbar LLP, Attorney



**Thomas Donley**  
*Board Secretary 2020*  
BRIS, Head of Finance



**Tracey Rizzuto**  
*Board Member 2020*  
LSU Human Resource Development,  
Associate Director



**Chelsea Moreau**  
*Board Member 2020*  
American Heart Association,  
CFRE, Community Impact Director



**Tracy Smith**  
*Board Member 2020*  
Healthy Blue, Community Relations



**William Assaf**  
*Board Member 2020*  
Microsoft, Senior Content Developer



**Ernesto Johnson**  
*Board Member 2020*  
ExxonMobil, Chemical Plant  
Superintendent

# The Board



Senior Program Coordinator Mitchell Provensal tours the farm at BREC Howell Park with visitors during Hustle & Grow capstone (pre-pandemic).



# Baton Roots

Community Farm at Howell Park

## Building food equity from the ground up



When 2020 started, Baton Roots Community Farm was poised to grow slow and steady. In March, when news of COVID-19 cases began to rise, our state went into a lockdown. Seeing the long road ahead in the reality of a society in the midst of a pandemic, we focused our efforts on doing whatever needed to begin bridging the now rampant food access issue. In less than 180 days, we increased our farm labor from a core staff of two full-time individuals 400% with full-time and part-time farmhands from the local area to help facilitate production and community training. Additionally, we fully expanded our farmland to its full four acres and added three satellite sites at neighboring schools, such as Capitol High School, Glen Oaks High School and Middle School, and Scotlandville High School. These satellite sites work two-fold, one as a local distribution point for some of the most food-insecure areas of our city, and two as a training ground for high school students to begin learning urban agricultural skills and healthy eating, called Hustle & Grow.

# New on the farm

To further our outreach even more in existing food deserts, we've begun our Garden-in-a-Box and Modular Garden models where stewards can poise land areas to receive raised plant beds with six months of maintenance and community training, so it can become self-sufficient.



Baton Roots crew builds beds at homes of Hustle & Grow trainees at the onset of the pandemic.

In collaboration with LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio, School of Architecture, artist Faheem Majeed, and the National Endowment of the Arts, Baton Roots began the planning process of bringing accommodations, art, and landscape advancements to the farm. The goal throughout the planning process is to capture as much community input to produce a booklet outlining the plan in Spring 2021.



LSU School of Landscape Architecture build plans for the National Endowment of the Arts' Baton Roots plan.



This entire vision was made possible with the continued support from the City of Baton Rouge Healthy BR's Geaux Get Healthy initiative. In tandem, with the help of early grant awards and gifts from Jennifer and Sean Reilly and McMains foundations via BRAF, Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation, Lynne Pisto, Capital Area United Way, Healthy Blue, and Cox Communications. This support, as well as the introduction of the Food Insecurity Coalition, a virtual gathering of mirror organizations working in food access, has become a catalyst for the program to create a critical impact in 2020 all the way into 2021.

# Outcomes

Despite the pandemic, Baton Roots' focus on building out a more robust farm and training program never faltered. Here are the highlights of 2020. .

# 5

Acres of farmland & satellite sites activated



# 11

thousand pounds of produce grown in 2020



# 600

hours of volunteer service hours done



# 60

Hustle & Grow youth trainees taught urban agriculture

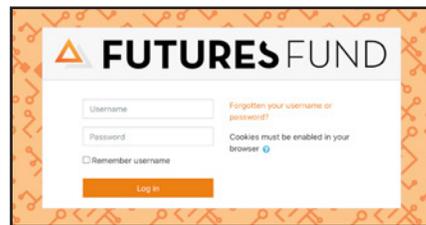


# Futures Fund

In the midst of Futures Fund's spring semester, the pandemic broke out, causing us to pause programming for the safety of our families and staff. As we recalibrated our strategy for the year, we saw two opportunities. One to bring our Coding for the Web curriculum online to be accessed regardless of in-person risks, and two, expedite our expansion to training adults, veterans, and workers displaced by COVID-19.

## Curriculum Digitization

During the summer we overhauled our existing curriculum and for the first time delved into the Learning Management System (LMS) Moodle. This advancement exponentially increased our ability to track and monitor student progress and retention, as well as provide offline access to our curriculum so that new trainees can learn and practice at their own pace during the week.



## Tech Academy Goes Virtual



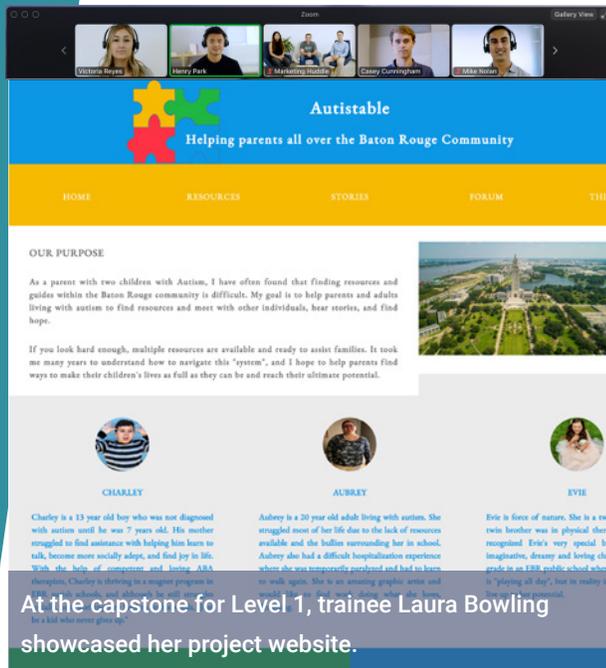
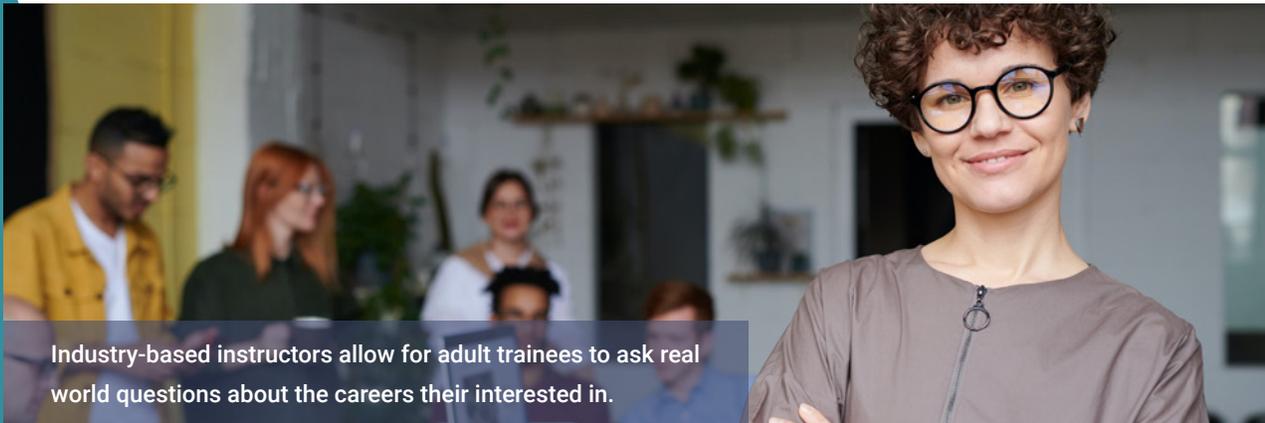
This fall we introduced our first digital experience with Futures Fund Tech Academy, geared toward our existing youth trainees. Rather than most virtual classes, we offered a series of interactive learning opportunities, live music, and guest speakers to enlighten and excite our youth during each of our ten Saturday morning sessions. Over 88 youth applied to the program, with 56 committing and attending consistently. Upon the close of the semester in December, we will see 7 trainees graduate from Coding for the Web Level 3.

Also this fall, Futures Fund debuted its Mentorship initiative to help prepare our graduated youth to peer mentor incoming trainees. Developed by Dexter Jackson, the mentorship program looks to challenge trainees in self-growth and development of their leadership styles and confidence. Additionally, skills of public speaking and developing and building concepts to fruition is also taught.

Mayor Broome speaks to trainees at virtual capstone (click video to play)

# Coding Boot Camp

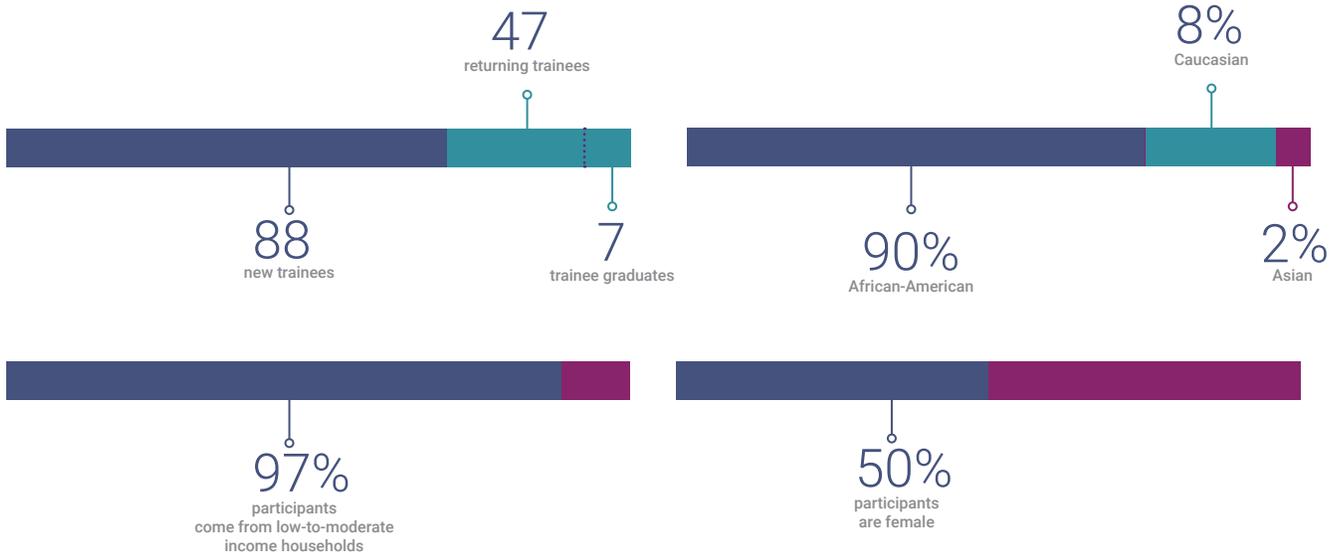
One month after the Tech Academy semester began, we launched our adult pilot cohort for the Coding Boot Camp, a weeknight Coding for the Web training program for adults. We currently have thirty adults and veterans enrolled in this course, poised to finish by late April 2021, leaving them to earn two Industry-Based Certifications (IBC) in less than sixth months. Additionally, we introduce guest speakers and weave in peer review, group work, and other skills building activities into our proprietary coursework. Our next cohort will begin early in January 2021.



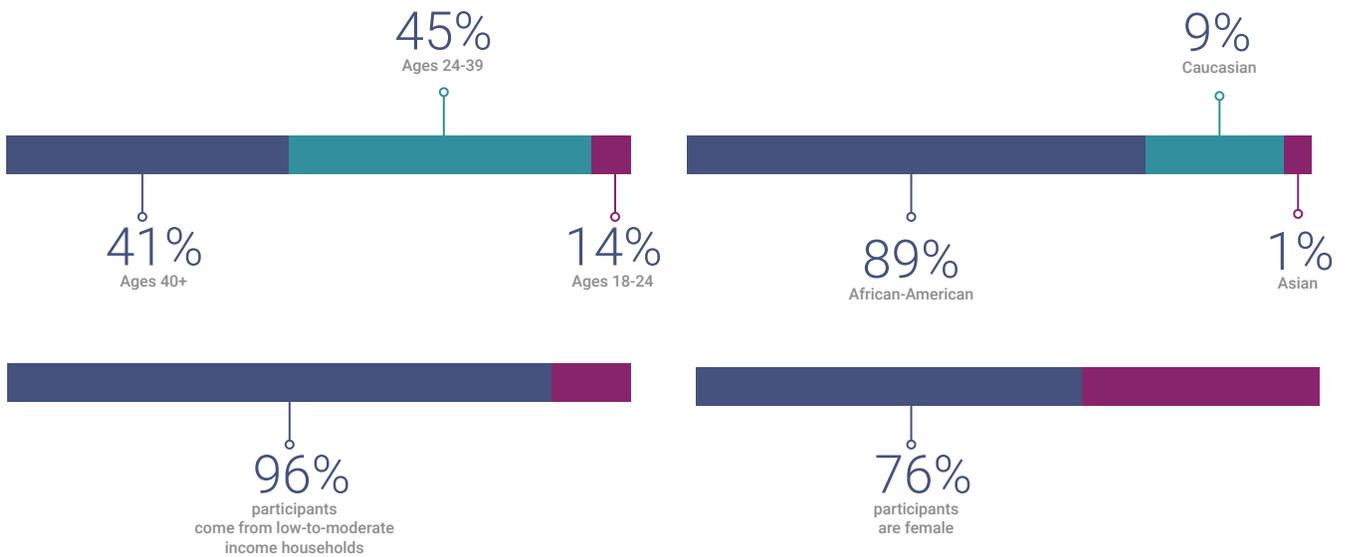
The large lift required to complete this program's virtual restructuring and addition of adults was only made possible by the support of forward-thinking and innovative funders, like the Build Baton Rouge, Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, BASF, Capital Area United Way, State Farm, Delta Regional Authority, Ad Fed Baton Rouge, TRiO Upward Bound, and LOFSA.

# Metrics

## Tech Academy (High School Teens)

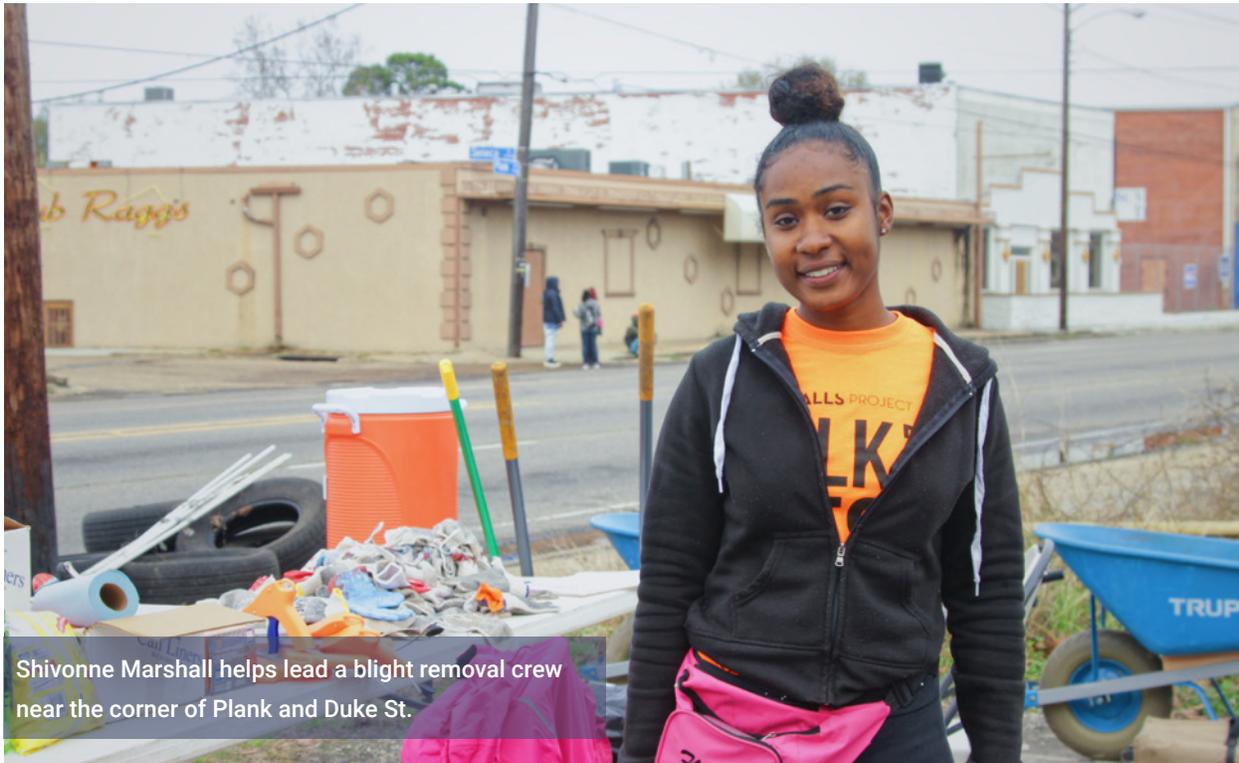


## Coding Boot Camp (Adults & Veterans)



# Reactivate “MLK Fest 2020”

Before the pandemic started, we were able to do one Reactivate clean up event, centered around Martin Luther King Junior Day. This weekend of service allowed for many volunteers to collectively impact Plank Road.



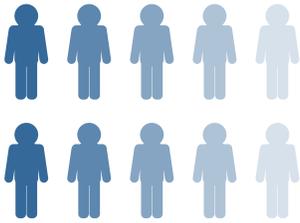
Shivonne Marshall helps lead a blight removal crew near the corner of Plank and Duke St.

Over the **4 mile** stretch of Plank Road and side streets, over **5 tons of blight** were picked up and hauled away.



For an area to start its journey to revitalization, a movement around that area must begin. For the past two MLK Fests, we have narrowed our focus alongside Plank Road, working in tandem with Build Baton Rouge and the City of Baton Rouge to bring new life to Plank Road and the surrounding streets. MLK Fest 2020 saw over 3,500 volunteers in 4 days. With a historic collaboration of 200 partners the Walls helped clean, paint, and reactivate 8 buildings on Plank Rd. and removed upwards of 5 tons of blight & debris from sites between Choctaw Drive and Winbourne Avenue.

A major draw and favorite activity of MLK Fest is the opportunity to paint. While painting buildings is usually left to the adults, MLK Fest hosts a Kid Zone where children are encouraged to come by and get creative on large pieces of primed plywood sheets for large canvases and old campaign signs for smaller canvases. Throughout the weekend and MLK Day, children worked together to paint gorgeous works of art, which Tillage Construction later hung on abandoned buildings.



# 3,500 Volunteers

from all over the parish, helping over the course of the MLK weekend.

Along with this work, volunteers helped finish painting The Renaissance Center, painted Blessed Sanctuary gold, and gave new life to a house and building located at 3010 Plank Rd. Additionally, volunteers added a fresh coat of paint on Express Communications, G&T Tires, and Daughters. Volunteers spruced up Busy Bee daycare with a new coat of paint while artist Dianna Ladmirault painted little bees on the front of the building. Lastly, artist Skinny Dope painted the outdoor logo and interior mural for the newest black-owned business along the Plank Road corridor, Memphis Mac!



Youth shows his handiwork on the artboards used for covering blighted buildings.



At the Kid Zone, youth and adults painted plywood and yard signs for art to cover the Plank Road corridor.



Volunteers from DOW Chemical stopped by to help freshen the paint on a business on Plank Road.



BEFORE



AFTER

Abandoned lot on the corner of Plank Road and Erie Street gets a landscaping makeover from volunteers.

MLK Fest was a collaborative effort between 200 partner organizations, funded by leaders of change, like ExxonMobil, Our Lady of the Lake, Healthy Blue, Capital Area United Way. We also received tremendous in-kind support from Lamar Advertising Company, PODS, PPG Paints, MetroMorphosis, Mid City Redevelopment Alliance, BREC, CADAV, G.E.E.P. Blight Ministries and IBM.

# Reactivate DFW “MLK Fest 2020”



The completed mural of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (below) was produce by local volunteers and artists in 48 hours.



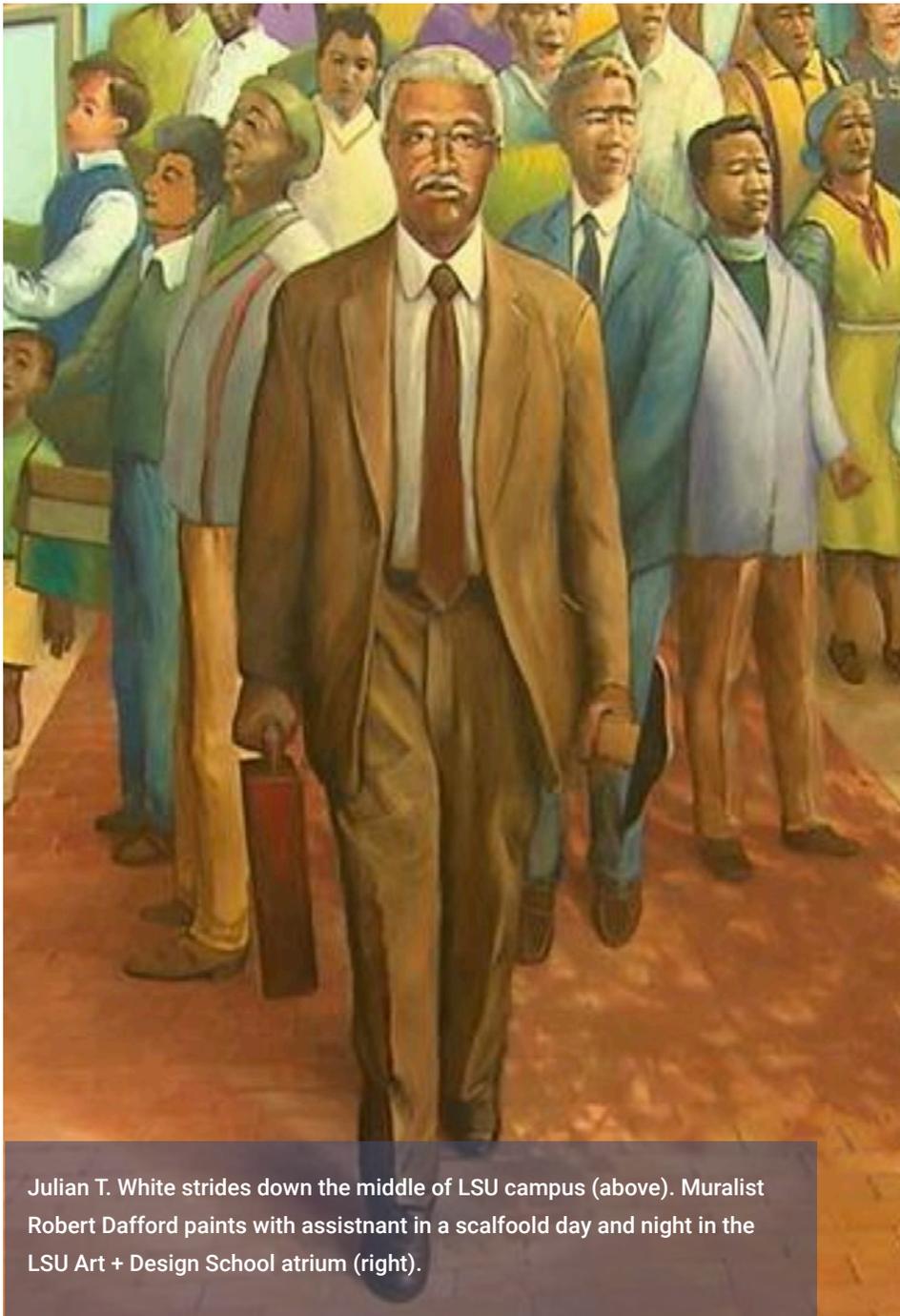
At the same time the good work was being done in North Baton Rouge, the same work was being done by hundreds of volunteers in Fair Park in partnership with the City of Dallas, Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center, Matthews Southwest, Urban Specialists, State Farm, and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas as REACTIVATE DFW.

REACTIVATE DFW is a coalition of community advocates who are planning and implementing quarterly community cleanup and blight remediation service projects in South Dallas’ Fair Park neighborhood. This coalition is currently building on the momentum started with the pilot MLK FEST project where hundreds of volunteers united in Fair Park to paint a mural and clean the MLK Day parade route. Under partner guidance and through referral, TWP will connect with

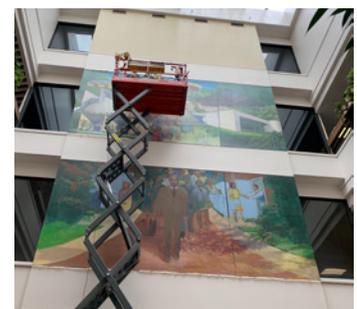
and solicit participation from neighborhood organizations located within the selected work area(s), such as houses of worship, schools, businesses, and social organizations.

In addition to MLK Fest achieving internally created event-specific objectives; efforts may also contribute to and be informed by broader goals established by other community development groups. TWP will incorporate similar community alignments for MLK Fest 2021 goals and objectives as it plans its work in Dallas; examples include Dallas’ Cultural Plan, developed in 2017 with input by 9000 residents; the overall core values of Empathy, Equity, Excellence, Ethics; and the upcoming Comprehensive Plan that Planning and Urban Design is developing for the City of Dallas.





Julian T. White strides down the middle of LSU campus (above). Muralist Robert Dafford paints with assistant in a scaffold day and night in the LSU Art + Design School atrium (right).



#### “Portrait of Professor Julian T. White” by Robert Dafford

If you go to the center of Louisiana State University’s campus, you’ll find yourself at the College of Art & Design. Inside the bright atrium a master artist and his team work in a flurry of color, transforming a once empty wall into a campus landmark. The halls, known for honing some of the greatest visionaries of Louisiana, now honor directly, of one of the most impressive and boundary-breaking Professors, Julian T. White.

# Public Art

This mural, championed together by The Walls Project, LSU Foundation, and the College of Art & Design, honors the legacy of the first-ever African-American professor at Louisiana State University. When Julian T. White joined LSU in 1971 to teach architecture, he paved a way for people of all backgrounds to have equal opportunity. Professor White spent thirty-three years as an educator at LSU, impacting his students, inspiring them to break barriers, and cultivating several waves of strong architects.

After his passing in 2011, the LSU Art & Design team honored Prof. White's work by naming their atrium after him. In addition to this, the team wanted to memorialize him in a bold and meaningful way. "When we were thinking about how to celebrate the naming of this space, we came upon the idea of doing a mural and not just a little bronze plaque that no one would read. We thought that this man's contribution that freed and opened the doors of LSU to everyone was great enough to be commemorated in a way just as exceptional as he and his teaching was." stated the College's Dean, Alkis Tsolakis, who received his inspiration for this project from a small picture cut out from Julian T. White's drivers license, a gift he received from the late professor's wife, Mrs. Loretta White. "His picture sits on my desk and looks at me every day," said Dean Alkis.

With 99 public murals in their catalog, The Walls Project was ecstatic for this landmark mural to become the cornerstone 100th. For the job, Walls recruited artist Robert Dafford, a master artist with nearly 500 murals under his belt. Globally known for his murals, Dafford has painted in a variety of places across the United States, as well as some in Canada, Belgium, France, and England. When hearing about the project he happily complied.

"Being from Louisiana, and LSU being the flagship for Arts in the state, I am very excited to paint something in the arts building and to honor Julian White who was the pioneer

minority person who opened the doors for so many who followed. That's an honor for me to get to do this and to paint so much diversity. The student body is so diverse now and I want to reflect that it started with this man leading the way." - Robert Dafford

This mural's completion did not come easily. Working at an active college campus in a space built like the atrium led to some engineering challenges. To combat the foot-traffic and space issues, artist Robert Dafford ingeniously designed the mural to be created into three large canvas panels. Work was going smoothly until Dafford fell from a ladder at his studio and broke his foot. The injury sustained required surgery and recovery time, halting production for another six months. Despite this setback, Dafford worked with his assistants to finish whatever he could while battling reduced mobility.

By the beginning of this year, Dafford was healed and ready to finally install the panels. The first pieces went up at the beginning of February. Dafford, with his production assistant, Miguel Lasala, began finishing the elaborate and large piece in the heart of the atrium. Currently, Dafford, Walls Project, and the LSU Art & Design team are celebrating Black History Month with the creation of this mural. The project is proposed to be finished in early March.

The Portrait of Julian White mural is already touching the lives of those around it. From LSU's Art & Design team to the students who see it every day, Julian T. White's impact is still being made.

"This project means everything to me. It means another step in freeing LSU and making a home for everyone. Another step in what Julian White did for LSU, for Louisiana, and for the world." - Dean Alkis

# #ONEROUGE

## Equal Pay for Equal Work

### 'Planting Seeds for Economic Equality' By Ellen Ogden

In January, a landmark moment was reached for our organization, and if all continues to progress, our state. Walls Project unveiled its 121st mural and first #ONEROUGE mural, Planting Seeds for Economic Equality. At the unveiling, Walls Project had distinguished speakers Amanda Brunson (Director of Women's Policy for Governor John Bel Edwards), Summer Steib (Director of LSU's Women Center), and Ellen Ogden (Muralist) discuss the importance of this movement, the work, and the vision behind the mural.



Artist Ellen Ogden works from a crane to reach all three stories of the MAPP building.



At the unveiling, speakers open up about the importance of fighting for equal pay for women and minorities.

Painted by local female muralist, Ellen Ogden, the mural spans three-stories on MAPP's Construction Downtown Baton Rouge Building (344 3rd Street). This mural encompasses the mission behind the #ONEROUGE Mural series, to use public art to create dialogue around the 9 Drivers of Poverty.

Equal Pay is not just fairness, it's about creating opportunity for better lives and truly valuing the contributions of a person by their skill and loyalty. Although we're almost two decades in the new millennium, we're still combating a 20th-century problem: paying women and minorities equally for the same work done by their white male counterparts. Louisiana has no Equal Pay Act, no law on the books to require that men and women be paid equally for equal work. And they are not. For every dollar a man makes, a white woman makes \$0.69, while an African American woman makes \$0.48 and a Latina makes \$0.52. (Poverty Driver #9) Equal pay discrepancies adversely impact Louisiana women, their families, and the economy as a whole. As more households become dual-income, or with females as heads of households, how can we allow for this to happen?



### ***“Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself”* by Langston Allston**

Through the support of our MLK Fest sponsors and donors, our second mural in the #ONEROUGE series was completed. Artist Langston Allston worked tirelessly during the festival event and beyond to finish this large-scale public mural on the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store at 2655 Plank Road. Artistic support was provided by local artist and sign writer, Ellen Ogden.

The mural, created in response to the violence and high crime rates found in impoverished neighborhoods, is to encourage others to think of all individuals as neighbors. We often see inadequate infrastructure creating these areas of concentrated poverty, but by banding together change can be made systematically. This movement creates an

economic chain reaction, in disinvested neighborhoods, businesses are scarce, including grocery stores and retail. Instead, abandoned buildings and blight stand in their place. These deficits not only displace the economy, but also creates health and wellness issues, perpetuating a cycle of systematic decline.

### ***“Drawing the Line”* by Bryson Boutte**

Despite having the pandemic start right as we began this mural, Bryson Boutte was able to adjust and safely complete the project. This triptych brightens 1116 S.14th Street with a vibrant message on social equity and resiliency, circling access to homeownership.



“This piece felt like it had a power of its own, pulling me to finish it everyday. Then George Floyd was murdered and America’s magnifying glass went to issues that have affected citizens for decades. I feel like this piece is a reminder of where we came from, and the type of action they took to install a strong community.” - Bryson Boutte, Artist

“Drawing the Line” is the third mural in the #ONEROUGE campaign, aimed at igniting discussion and action for the reasons behind the driver of poverty - Lack of homeownership and escalating rental costs.

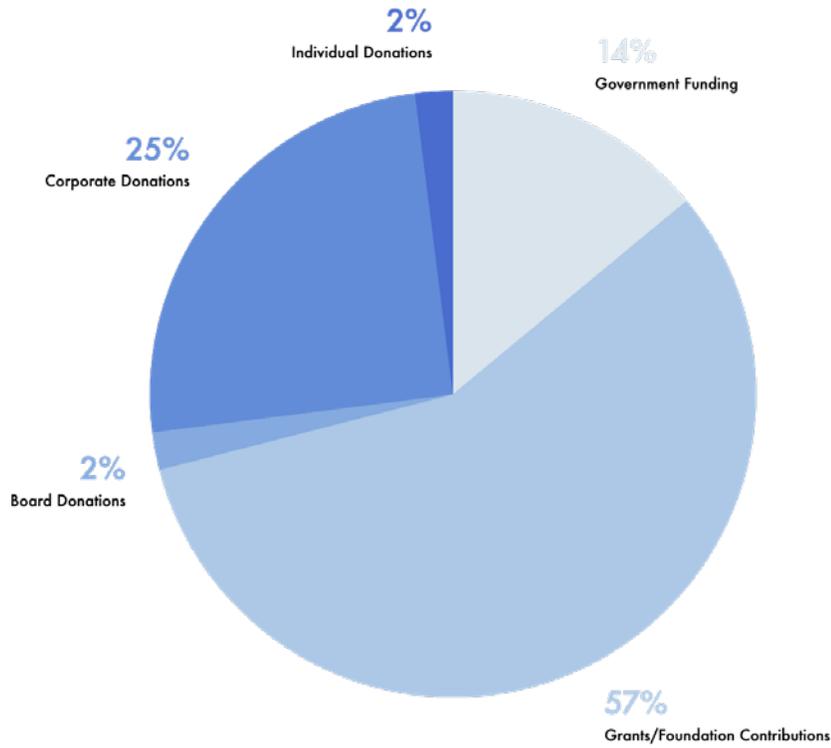
To elevate the great work already being done to dismantle this driver, Walls Project partnered with Kimble Properties and Partners Southeast. Both organizations work tirelessly to continue driving access to homeownership for everyone.

“We believe art is a vital component in the revitalization of this neighborhood. We look forward to building a long term working relationship with Casey and his team at the Walls Project as we continue on our journey of adding value to both the People and the buildings in Old South Baton Rouge.” - Anthony Kimble, Kimble Properties

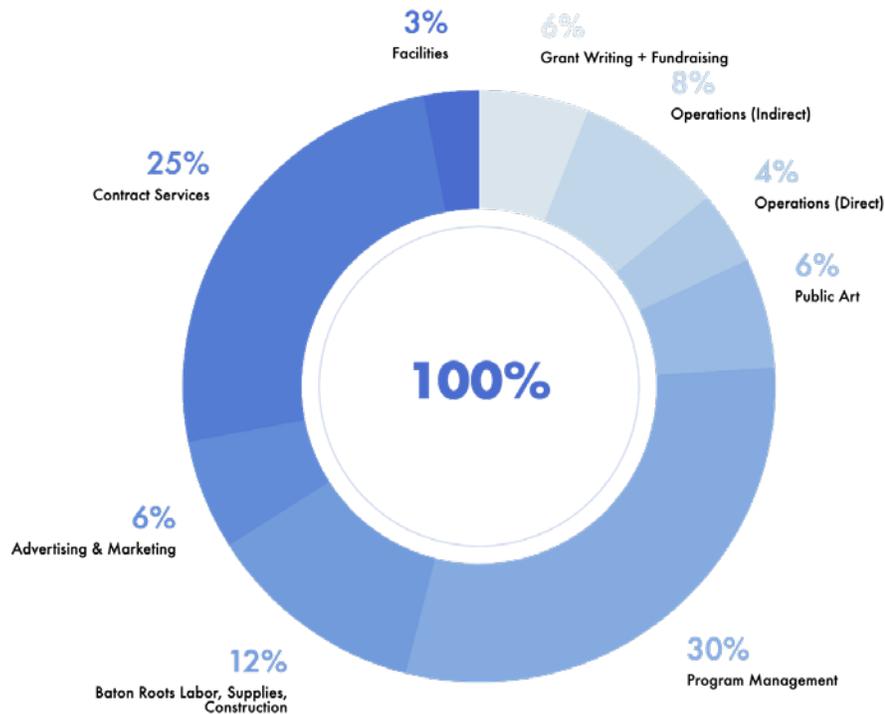
# 2021 Financials

For a full 2021 financial report, please contact us.

## Sources of Revenue



## Expenses





# WALLS

PROJECT

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