



Smart Growth  
A M E R I C A

2025 Annual Report



# A note from SGA President & CEO, Beth Osborne

*When I stepped into the role of President and CEO of Smart Growth America earlier this year, I did so after many years working alongside this team, first on our policy team and later as Vice President for Transportation and Thriving Communities. My experience at SGA, at USDOT, and on Capitol Hill has shaped my understanding of why the organization matters. SGA does not just have big ideas; we're a team of passionate experts committed to on-the-ground action, translating real-world challenges into practical solutions that work for communities of all sizes and contexts.*

*The past year was not an easy one. A new federal administration, an unprecedented housing crisis, and funding uncertainty created real questions for communities across the country. The need for solutions across housing, transportation, climate, equity, and governance only became more urgent.*

*I am incredibly proud of how our staff, board, and partners responded. This year, we supported hundreds of communities through hands-on technical assistance. We updated the definition of smart growth to provide greater clarity and alignment for the movement. We launched redesigned websites for both Smart Growth America and Transportation for America, making our tools, data, and analysis more accessible to the people who rely on them. And we continued to produce reports and research that cut through complicated findings to help decision-makers understand what is working, what is not, and what needs to change.*

*As we look toward the future, I am genuinely excited by what comes next. In early January, we will mark 25 years of Smart Growth America, a milestone that has allowed us to reflect on our impact and also plan for what's next. Over a quarter century, the policy landscape has changed, the challenges facing communities have evolved, and the scale of the work has grown. What hasn't changed is our continued mission to help communities become more healthy, prosperous, and resilient.*

*That commitment continues to guide everything we do: delivering direct support where it is needed most, producing clear and actionable research, and advancing common-sense, bipartisan solutions rooted in the realities communities face every day. As we enter our next chapter, I am confident in the direction of this organization and grateful to everyone who makes this work possible.*

**Beth Osborne**  
President and CEO  
Smart Growth America



# Celebrating 25 years of impact

## Our history

From a small organization to national leadership

What began in 2000 with just three staff members has grown into a national leader of the smart growth movement. Today, Smart Growth America is working with policymakers, advocates, and practitioners to connect the dots across the sectors that shape our daily lives, from transportation to housing and development—building coalitions, shaping policy at all levels of government, and driving practical, nonpartisan solutions. At a time when communities are confronting rising housing costs, unsafe streets, and the growing impacts of climate change, our work has never been more urgent or more relevant.

## Our North Star

Healthy, prosperous, and resilient communities for all

Our work has always been guided by our North Star: we envision a country where transportation, housing, and development choices create communities that are healthy, prosperous, and resilient—no matter where you live or who you are. Over the past quarter century, SGA has turned that belief into action by delivering hands-on support to communities tackling urgent challenges, advocating for policies that support connected, inclusive development, and sharing ideas and research that shape public opinion and policy.

## Building for the Future

Strengthening our foundation and driving change nationwide

As we celebrate our 25 years of work, we are strengthening the foundation for the decades ahead. We know this next chapter will demand creativity, collaboration, and courage, the same qualities that have defined Smart Growth America since its founding. We are investing in the organization's health by broadening funding sources, aligning resources with program goals, and refining our communications to better share our impact.

We are advancing policies and partnerships that expand access to a wider range of housing types and price points, making it possible for more people to live in well-connected communities with access to jobs and opportunity. We are also working to reshape the way the country invests in transportation, so it truly delivers on its promises of safety, repair, and access for everyone. At the same time, we are growing the smart growth movement by supporting state, regional, and community partners who are leading change on the ground. Together, these efforts ensure Smart Growth America remains trusted, nimble, and effective, so that we can sustain our work in an evolving political and economic landscape.

## Looking Ahead

Building on 25 years of progress

The past twenty-five years have shown what's possible when vision meets action. The next twenty-five will be defined by how we deepen that impact, supporting more communities, shaping stronger policies, and expanding the reach of the smart growth movement so more people can live, work, and thrive in places they are proud to call home.



## Smart Growth America's programs and coalitions

Smart Growth America's programs and coalitions work collaboratively to shape communities where people thrive. Through research, advocacy, and hands-on support, our network of advocates, decision-makers, and field experts works together to advance policies and practices that help communities become more healthy, prosperous, and resilient.



The **National Complete Streets Coalition** works to ensure streets prioritize safety over speed, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.

The **Center for Zoning Solutions** is our home for the zoning reform movement, working to tackle barriers to smart growth and advance policies to encourage mixed-use development and diverse housing options.

**Transportation for America** is the transportation arm of SGA and works to create a transportation system that safely, affordably, and accessibly connects everyone to jobs, services, and opportunities through diverse travel options.

**LOCUS** is a coalition that brings together purpose-driven developers and investors to advance and affect smart growth policy and outcomes at the federal, state, and local levels.

The **National Brownfields Coalition** is a coalition of practitioners that develops and advocates for federal policies and practices that promote the cleanup, remediation, and equitable redevelopment of underutilized and environmentally contaminated land. It is managed in partnership with staff from CCLR, the Center for Creative Land Recycling.

The **Arts & Culture Program** advances the integration of arts, culture, and creative placemaking into community planning and transportation projects to strengthen neighborhoods, amplify community voices, and support equitable, resilient development.

The **Smart Growth Roundtable** is made up of leaders from state, regional, and local organizations across the country focused on pioneering smart growth strategies.

**CHARGE**, the Coalition Helping America Rebuild and Go Electric, is a coalition of transportation, industry, environmental, and civic organizations supporting smart policy to electrify America's transportation system. It is jointly led with the Clean Vehicles Campaign.

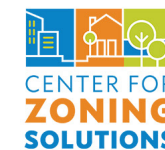
The **State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI)** is a collaborative project between Smart Growth America and the High Road Strategy Center at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, working to rethink policies and processes to produce better transportation outcomes.



Smart Growth  
A M E R I C A



National Complete  
Streets Coalition



CENTER FOR  
ZONING  
SOLUTIONS



Transportation  
for America



LOCUS  
Responsible Real Estate  
Developers & Investors



NATIONAL  
BROWNFIELDS  
COALITION



State  
Smart Transportation  
Initiative





## 2025 by the numbers

### 46 states + DC

where we worked alongside communities across the country

### 275 communities

supported with direct technical assistance and policy expertise

### 3,000+ pages of zoning codes

reviewed to remove barriers and unlock better housing outcomes

### 52 complete streets policies

reviewed to advance safer, more accessible streets

### 400+ organizations

signed onto our letters urging Congress to invest in more livable, connected communities

### 4 quick-build safety demonstration projects

including a Harrisonburg, VA, demonstration that reduced speeds by 8 mph

### 8,000+ people reached

through public programming, convenings, and educational events

### 20 public programs and events

bringing together practitioners, advocates, and decision-makers

### 120 presentations

delivered to partners and technical assistance recipients

### 1,500+ press mentions

amplifying our research and on-the-ground work nationwide

### 200 articles and blog posts

published to translate complex policy into practical action

### 36 videos

telling the stories behind the data and the communities we serve

## Charting the path forward

### A new strategic framework that meets the moment

Our work has become more urgent than ever, as the U.S. faces a housing crisis and the transportation system continues to fail to provide safe, reliable options. This year, Smart Growth America, with the help of our board, staff, and partners, developed a new strategic framework to align our efforts with the realities of the current moment.

In preparing our new plan, we identified significant opportunities, including federal momentum for comprehensive housing legislation, the next surface transportation reauthorization bill anticipated in Fall 2026, and increased needs from local and state groups that currently have less political and financial support.

The strategic framework centers four core objectives that will guide our work through 2027:

- Improve organizational health to enable long-term work in a variety of economic and political environments.
- Elevate our work on how to deliver more housing types near transportation, services, and economic opportunity that are in the highest demand.
- Demonstrate how the current approach to funding the surface transportation system fails to deliver on its promises and build support for a new approach to the federal surface transportation program in the reauthorization process.
- Build the smart growth movement by increasing support to state and regional partners and strengthening relationships with community-based advocates.

### Updating the definition of smart growth for today

In 2025, we updated the definition of smart growth with input from partners, simplifying it from ten principles to five. The result is a clearer, more practical framework that reflects today's realities and will help guide the smart growth movement going forward.

#### What is smart growth?

Smart growth is an approach to building neighborhoods that provides people with different types of housing at affordable levels, ways to get where they need to go, both in and out of a car, and puts the things they need close to where they live.

A smart growth approach utilizes five key principles:

1. Locate the things people need (jobs, groceries, schools, etc) close to where they live.
2. Build a safe transportation system that connects people to jobs and other needs, whether they drive, take transit, walk, or bike.
3. Make sure people can afford to live in smart growth communities at all stages of life.
4. Give people a say in what is built in their own neighborhoods.
5. Focus development in existing communities with a strong sense of place.



# Eight highlights from 2025

*2025 was a challenging year. A new federal administration, funding uncertainty, and shifting political dynamics created real headwinds for communities and advocates alike. Smart Growth America’s staff stepped up to meet the moment, supporting communities on the ground, producing clear and accessible research and analysis, and using that work to inform and drive our advocacy efforts. The stories below highlight how we delivered impact in 2025 across all aspects of our work.*



## Our impact and national reach

Smart Growth America’s mission is grounded in our work with communities. In 2025, Smart Growth America led work in 46 states plus Washington, DC, working with more than 300 communities spanning rural to urban contexts. These engagements include a range of partners, including community-based organizations, local government staff, county government staff, and elected officials. Through our hands-on technical assistance programs, including Community Connectors, ZEST, Counties for Housing Solutions, the Reconnecting Communities Institute, the Champions Institute, and the Culture and Community Network, we helped local leaders navigate complex systems, build local capacity, and turn their ideas into action.

## Redefining smart growth

This year, Smart Growth America undertook a task 30 years in the making: we updated the definition of smart growth to reflect today’s challenges and opportunities. By simplifying the original ten principles into five straightforward principles, we helped the movement better understand what smart growth is, why it matters, and how to put it into practice.

## Modernizing our websites

2025 brought SGA a new look: this year, Smart Growth America and Transportation for America launched redesigned websites. SGA’s new site sharpens our language and focus, and makes it easier for folks to find the tools and info they’re looking for. T4America’s relaunched site features the new State of the System data hub, an interactive tool that synthesizes foundational transportation data to show how \$1.5 trillion in federal transportation spending since 1991 has been spent and whether it’s delivering results.

## Tracking and shaping the federal agenda

Smart Growth America closely tracked and decoded how decisions by the Trump administration affected transportation, housing, and community development. We translated funding rescissions and proposed policy changes into clear, actionable analysis that helped partners and policymakers understand their real-world impacts. Moving from analysis to action, we led multiple letters to Congress throughout the year, securing sign-on support from more than 400 partner organizations to elevate shared priorities and concerns.

## Delivering innovative and actionable resources

This year, Smart Growth America released the 2025 Best Complete Streets Policies Report, our signature report that evaluates the nation’s best Complete Streets policies and highlights what made them noteworthy. We also produced Housing for Havens, a guide to developing housing on county-owned land with the National Association of Counties, and a U.S. climate and land use planning guide with the U.S. Climate Alliance. Those are just a few of the many resources we released this year. As always, our resources are designed to uplift smart growth strategies and to turn complex ideas into clear, practical guides for those who use them.

## Advocating for communities on Capitol Hill

Smart Growth America’s federal advocacy is rooted in relationship-building and direct engagement with lawmakers and staff. Over the course of the year, our team held more than 200 meetings with federal policymakers, including housing and development briefings with the Build America Caucus. These conversations advanced priorities ranging from housing barriers and brownfields to Opportunity Zones, Complete Streets, TIFIA and RRIF, and transportation reauthorization, all grounded in lessons from our work with communities across the country.

## Reframing the housing conversation: type, place, and price

In light of the housing affordability and access crises, we launched an updated housing messaging platform: type, place, and price. Drawing on years of experience, the platform clarifies why the kind of housing we build, where it is located, and what it costs must be taken into account alongside increasing supply if we want to have a real impact on affordability.

## Championing safe, accessible streets

Throughout the year, our Complete Streets team worked across the country to adopt and implement Complete Streets policies and test quick-build demonstration projects. An important highlight was the Kentucky Complete Streets Leadership Academy, where we partnered with three cities and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to design quick-build demonstration projects on state-owned roads. While implementation is a key aspect of our work, so is highlighting Complete Streets successes. To help tell the stories of communities that have championed change, we released the Championing Complete Streets video series with AARP, showing how Complete Streets can look different in every community, but across the board, they help create safer, more accessible streets.



## Bringing people together

**One of Smart Growth America's greatest strengths is our ability to convene people across sectors, disciplines, and geographies to learn, share, and turn ideas into action.**

In 2025, we brought hundreds of leaders together at the Equity Summit, hosted in-person convenings for technical assistance programs such as ZEST and the Culture and Community Network, and held informational sessions on Capitol Hill to discuss infill housing, brownfields, and transportation reauthorization. Throughout the year, we also led more than 20 webinars, creating accessible spaces for learning, connection, and practical problem-solving.

Beyond our own events, Smart Growth America staff delivered presentations and provided technical assistance in communities across the country, reaching thousands of people and helping local leaders, advocates, and practitioners understand how smart growth can support safer streets, more housing options, and stronger, more equitable communities.





## Gulf Coast rail: A victory two decades in the making

This year marked a critical moment for passenger rail and our most important win of the year: after nearly 20 years without service, passenger rail service returned to the Gulf Coast. This story is one of persistence, bringing the right stakeholders together, and even creating new federal programs that could change the trajectory of U.S. passenger rail in the coming years.

The absence of Gulf Coast rail dates back to 2005, when Hurricane Katrina devastated the region and its infrastructure, including the mediocre rail service that had run through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama in prior years. In 2013, Smart Growth America's transportation program, Transportation for America, was hired by the Southern Rail Commission to lead its state and federal policy efforts.

From the outset, T4America Senior Policy Advisor and former mayor of Meridian, MS, John Robert Smith, recognized that bringing back passenger rail to the Gulf Coast would require vision to create something new and better. From the outset, we realized that existing federal transportation programs were not designed to support the expansion of passenger rail service. T4America, in partnership with the Southern Rail Commission, Senator Roger Wicker of Mississippi, and scores of local advocates, led a multi-year advocacy campaign that brought passenger rail into the federal surface transportation program for the first time in 2015, crafting new grant programs like the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) and Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) programs. Created to meet the needs of the Gulf Coast while also benefiting the entire country, these new federal tools provided the funding sources that would ultimately support infrastructure upgrades and initial operating costs for Gulf Coast service and other routes nationwide.

In 2025, our decades-long persistence paid off. The Mardi Gras route launched with two daily round-trips between New Orleans and Mobile, with stops in Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula. Members of the T4America team rode the inaugural train and saw firsthand the energy and excitement as communities across the Gulf Coast gathered to celebrate its return.

That momentum has continued in the first months of service as ridership has more than doubled Amtrak's original projections, and the restored line is already delivering economic benefits, including new restaurants and visitor experiences along the route.

This victory is not just about one train line. The Gulf Coast rail restoration has helped prove that passenger rail can thrive when federal policy aligns with local and regional leadership. Since 2016, the new federal programs created with T4America's support have already unlocked investments for other communities seeking expanded passenger rail. In total, \$11.5 billion has been awarded for passenger rail improvements and corridor identification nationwide, creating the right environment for continued expansion across the country.

Smart Growth America's Gulf Coast victory shows what's possible when we don't take no for an answer: building coalitions, engaging leaders, and expanding passenger rail across the country.





## Tulsa, OK: Helping to streamline housing development

Implementing smart growth—making communities more walkable and places where people can live, work, and play—can take years to materialize. It takes trust-building, thoughtful analysis, and champions both inside and outside government before meaningful change can take place. Our work in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a clear example of why that long view matters.

Our work with Tulsa has spanned nearly a decade. Since 2016, the city has partnered with SGA to review its comprehensive plan, conduct a fiscal impact analysis, and review its efforts to preserve and expand its housing supply across a range of housing types. While each engagement stands on its own, together we built trust and helped the city create a vision for change.

As development pressure increased in Tulsa, city leaders recognized that existing zoning and permitting systems were falling short. In 2024, Smart Growth America partnered with the Anne & Henry Zarrow Foundation, a local philanthropy deeply invested in Tulsa, to analyze where there were disconnects and provide recommendations to make change.

To support these efforts, we spoke with local decision-makers to take a closer look at how projects actually moved through the zoning, permitting, and review processes, and where there might be opportunities to improve. We also examined staff capacity, cross-department coordination, digital tools, and community engagement to identify opportunities to improve how the system works day-to-day.

In early 2025, the newly formed organization Housing Forward published our recommendations as the [Smart Growth Report: City of Tulsa Housing Development Analysis](#). The report outlines a set of practical, phased recommendations to address what isn't working and to help Tulsa meet its goals. Our recommendations were straightforward: institute a place-based housing strategy, make the process easier to understand, give staff greater authority and support, restore transparency in decision-making, and remove unnecessary steps that only delayed housing projects. Our recommendations were shaped by our time in Tulsa and by listening to local staff, developers, and community members, and focused on changes the city could implement.

Following the report's release, the city moved quickly to implement a number of recommended changes, including improving staff capacity in permitting, increasing interdepartmental coordination, and passing zoning code changes that will encourage more housing development. We expect that momentum to continue in 2026, with the anticipated launch of permit-ready housing plans.

Progress takes time, and thanks to our sustained partnership, engaged community voices, and a growing willingness to confront structural barriers head-on, we saw momentum build. For Smart Growth America, Tulsa represents what can happen when the right technical expertise meets the political will to tackle a big problem, and how our work can create changes that will ripple well beyond our partnerships.



## Harrisonburg, Virginia: Turning a street that divided a community into a chance to connect

Mason Street in Harrisonburg, VA, is only four blocks long, but the impact it has had on the community extends far beyond what's visible.

Built in the 1960s during the height of urban renewal, Mason Street cuts through the historically Black Northeast neighborhood just north of downtown. A wide, high-speed road that prioritizes moving vehicles quickly over anything else, Mason Street tore through the heart of the community, forcing more than 100 families from their homes, evicting businesses, creating barriers to economic success, and locking in patterns of disinvestment that still shape daily life today. The result is not just a dangerous roadway, but a lasting physical and historical divide between downtown and the Northeast community.

In 2023, Harrisonburg joined Smart Growth America's Community Connectors program, supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, as one of 15 communities working to confront historic harms and build a better future, supported by capacity-building grants and technical assistance to address past infrastructure decisions.

From the beginning of Harrisonburg's project, the project team knew they wanted to focus on Mason Street. With SGA's guidance, the city committed to working with two local community-based organizations in the Northeast neighborhood and launched a renewed planning process for Mason Street that centered on the resident experience and their hopes for the future. Weekly meetings created space for honest conversations about the past, gave residents a better understanding of proposed changes, and provided a platform to share ideas on how the street could be used in the future.

In working with Harrisonburg and other Community Connectors teams, Smart Growth America has learned that projects move at the speed of trust.

And once the trust was established, the project team was ready to take action. After a year of engaging important stakeholders, SGA's Complete Streets team began working with the cohort to implement a quick-build safety demonstration project. The goal was to test ideas in the real world, gather data, and invite the broader Northeast community to join the conversation.

Northeast residents, city staff from multiple departments, a local bike advocate, and a neighborhood pastor were formally brought into the process, and the city also used a portion of its grant to compensate residents and community-based organizations for their time, underscoring the community's integral role in the process.

This past summer, Mason Street was transformed by a quick-build demonstration project. The demonstration project converted the roadway to two-way travel, replaced traffic signals with two-way stops, added temporary roundabouts and new crosswalks, and slowed vehicle speeds. Early analysis showed no significant impact on travel times, and, in some cases, shorter trips along the corridor.

Notably, the deputy city manager led the project with backing from the city manager, and key staff, including the director of public works, ensured ideas could move quickly from vision to implementation. A city council member leading a Black history nonprofit and a leader of the Northeast neighborhood association were also core team members.

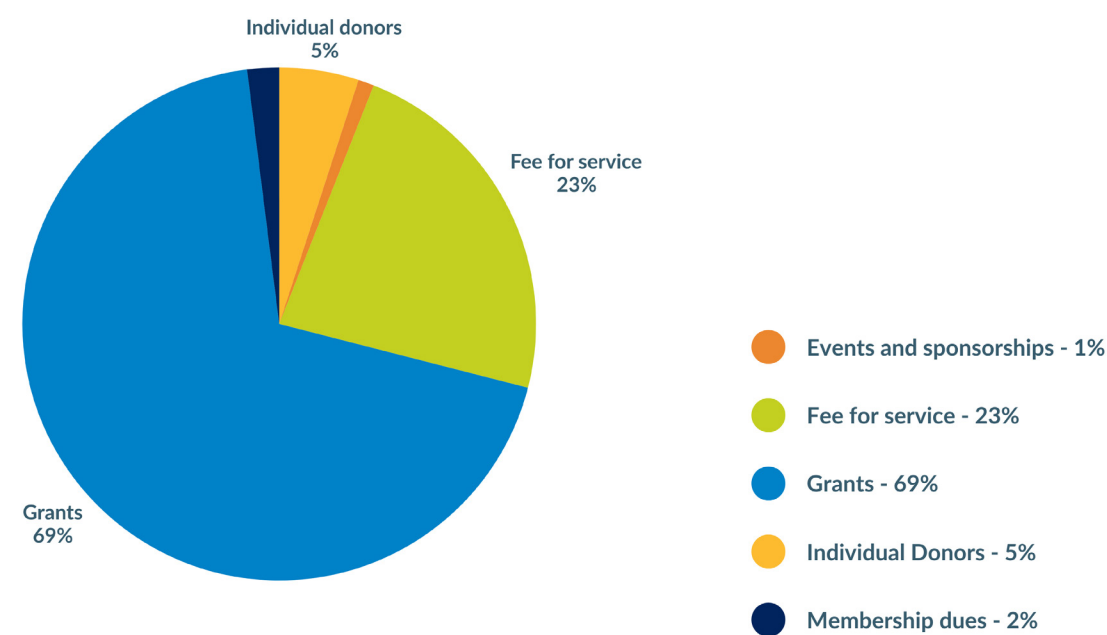
The effort to better integrate Mason Street into the community is ongoing, and it has already reshaped how Harrisonburg approaches planning decisions. By slowing down, sharing power, and aligning transportation decisions with community goals, the community is better equipped to tackle its biggest challenges alongside community members.



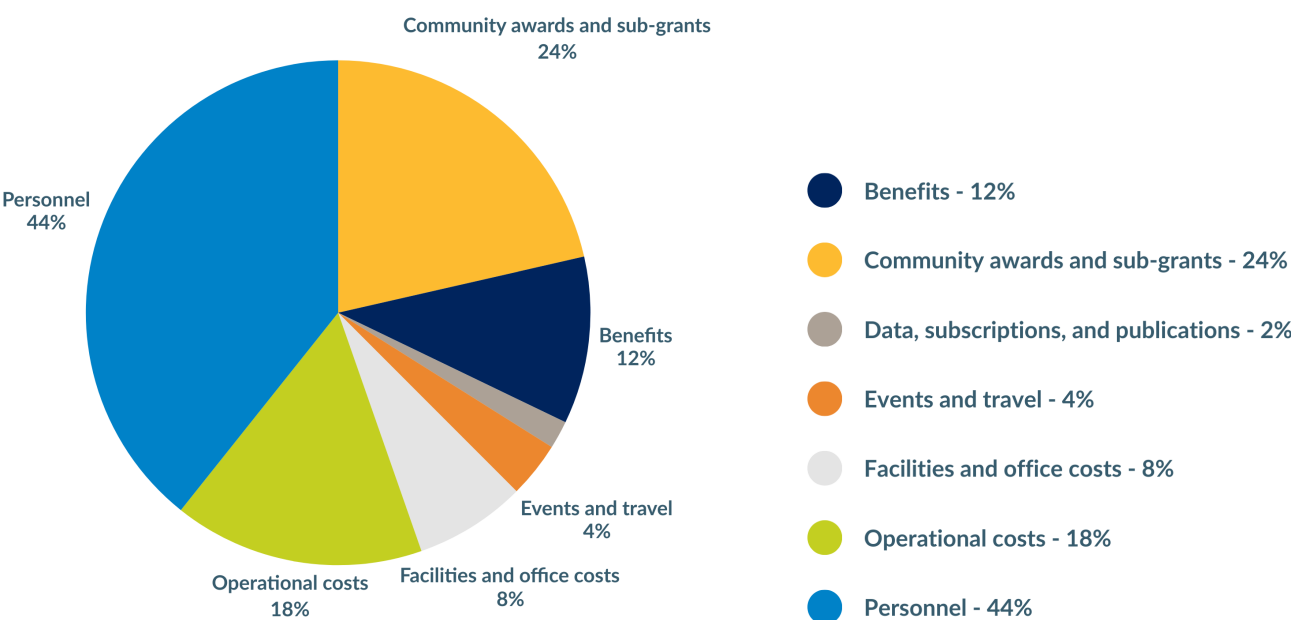
# 2025 Financials

In FY2025, Smart Growth America’s revenue was driven primarily by grants and earned income, enabling strategic investments in staff capacity, program delivery, and community partnerships. Total expenses for the year were \$8,582,296.

Where does our revenue come from?



How do we spend it?



# Thank you to our 2025 supporters

We are deeply grateful for the donors and funders who supported us in 2025. Your generosity makes our work possible.

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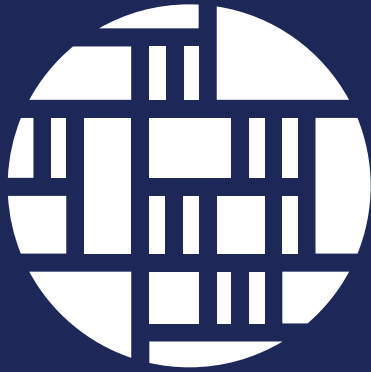
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