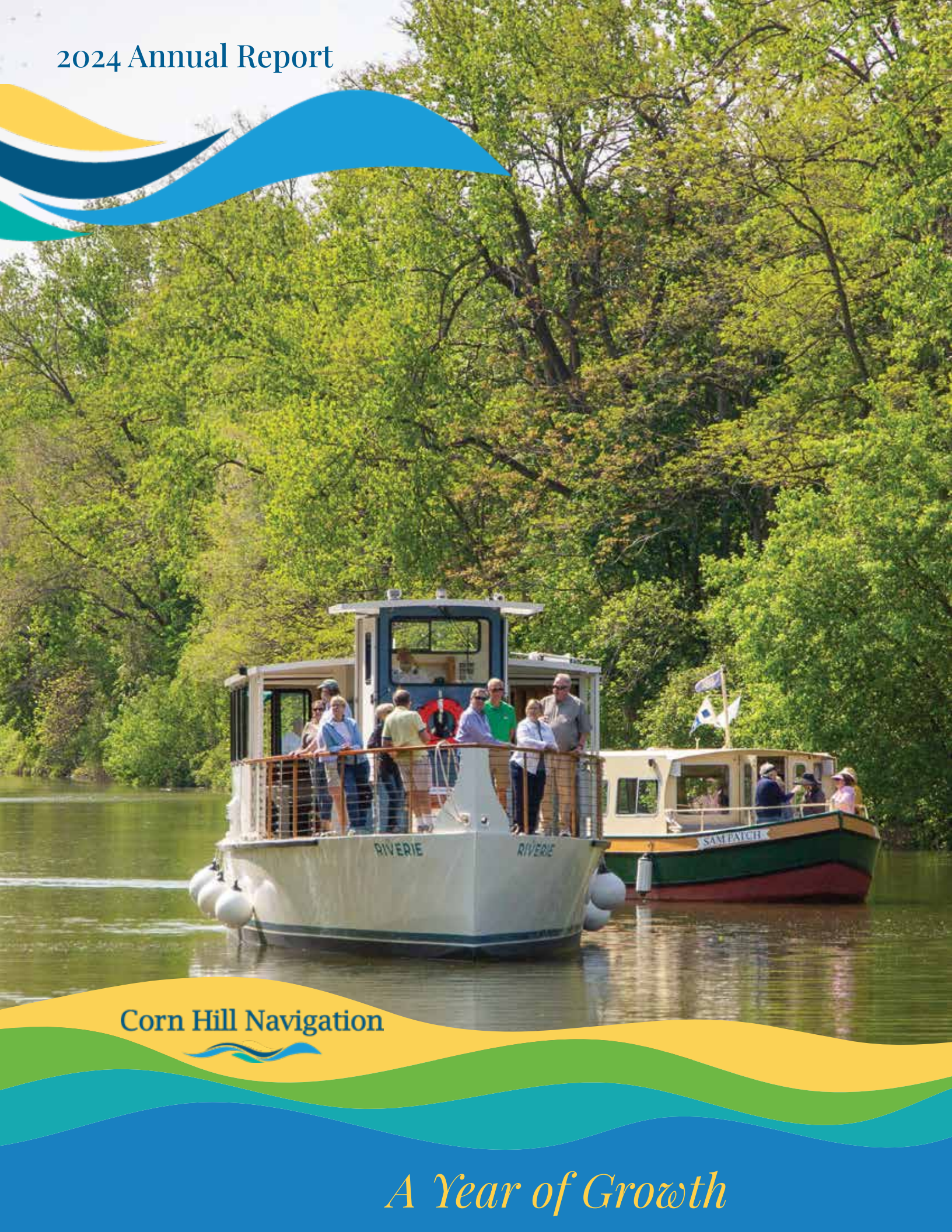


2024 Annual Report



Corn Hill Navigation



A Year of Growth

A letter from our Executive Director

I grew up in Rochester and was honored to return in 2023 to take the helm at Corn Hill Navigation (CHN) as its Executive Director. Corn Hill Navigation is an incredible organization dedicated to sharing two of Rochester's greatest attributes - the Erie Canal and Genesee River - with residents and visitors from around the world.

As we cruise these unique and scenic waterways, we invite passengers to take a moment to contemplate the role of the Erie Canal and Genesee River in shaping our history. The intersection of these two waterways established Rochester as America's first boomtown: the Genesee powered the early mills in our Flour City and the Erie Canal connected us to both the growing Midwest and the East Coast ports.

Corn Hill Navigation set new records in 2024 with 1,065 cruises and 19,654 passengers aboard our boats! Our 151 education cruises served 3,743 students. Locals and visitors enjoyed live music by 25 bands on *Sam Patch* and *Riverie*. We hosted experts who spoke about the impact of the Erie Canal on the Underground Railroad, women's suffrage, baseball, food, and more. We saw great blue herons, egrets, and bald eagles. Countless memories were made.

Corn Hill Navigation is supported by the hard work of more than 80 people - employees, volunteers, board members, and more. Our incredible year of growth wouldn't be possible without them and the generous contributions that keep our boats afloat. Your support is critical to the work we are doing at Corn Hill Navigation.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the highlights of our remarkable 34th season. And I look forward to seeing you on the water in 2025 to learn, enjoy, and celebrate our history and community.

With gratitude,



Patrick Russell-Walsh
Executive Director



Corn Hill Waterfront & Navigation Foundation

is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the mission of fostering the improvement and sustainability of the Erie Canal and Genesee River through education, awareness, and enjoyment.

A Reflection of our Waterways

CHN continues to increase awareness and sustainability of the Erie Canal and Genesee River by embracing the very characteristics that define these waterways



CHN is transformative.

Almost 34 years ago, CHN recognized the need to transform the public's engagement with our waterways. In 1825, the Erie Canal changed the landscape of the City of Rochester, connecting local businesses with outside markets. Meanwhile, the Genesee River established Rochester as the Flour City, providing power to flour mills located along its banks. By 1991, despite transforming a region, the value of the waterways was overlooked. Industrial waste had depleted water quality, species native to the water failed to thrive, and local residents were unengaged with the natural resources that had shaped their city.

With the launch of *Sam Patch* in 1991 and *Riverie* in 2023, CHN has transformed the public's awareness of - and engagement with - our waterways. This year, CHN provided 1,065 cruises to connect the public back to the water. Passengers leave CHN's Erie Canal and Genesee River cruises with new perspectives, recognizing the need to sustain these waterways for future generations.

CHN is innovative.

In addition to their transformative potential, Rochester's waterways also represent the impact of innovation. From the eight-year development of the Erie Canal to its advanced lock system to the picturesque intersection of the Barge Canal with the Genesee River, the city's waterways highlight novel engineering feats and remarkable points of interest.

Since its inception, CHN has embraced this same value. With the construction of *Sam Patch* in 1991, the organization launched the first commercial vessel within Rochester's city limits in 30 years. Today, CHN continues to be at the forefront of waterfront education and development. Not only is *Riverie* the only vessel serving downtown Rochester, but CHN's programming continues to offer unique opportunities for residents and visitors to experience our waterways.

In 2024, CHN's one-of-a-kind environmental education program provided all fifth graders from the Rochester City School District (RCSD) - more than 1,500 students - with the opportunity to tour the Genesee River aboard *Riverie* while learning about conservation, environmental stewardship, and the diversity of the water's ecosystem.

Meanwhile, CHN continues to find unexpected ways to merge entertainment and education. From bird watching tours to musical guests, art cruises and lecture series, to cruises with activities made just for kids, CHN continually devises innovative programs that meet the community's needs.



Malik Evans
Mayor of Rochester

Corn Hill Navigation is expanding opportunities for thousands of residents and visitors to experience downtown Rochester in new and meaningful ways. Nearly every RCSD fifth grader took an educational tour in 2024 that included thought-provoking, hands-on learning, ensuring we are creating future champions of the city's natural spaces. *Riverie* inspires us all to open our eyes and appreciate the incredible Genesee River cutting a ribbon through our city.

CHN values connection.

CHN recognizes the power of water to bring a community together. The Genesee River and Erie Canal cross the state, transporting goods, people, and ideas. Our waterways facilitated the connections that shaped our city.

CHN embraces this value by offering opportunities for connection to all Rochester residents and visitors. Cruises often highlight intergenerational connections, as parents and grandparents sit alongside those from younger generations, introducing them to the value of the waterways. CHN's work with organizations such as the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation and Rochester Accessible Adventures expanded our ability to offer inclusive and comfortable experiences that connect more individuals to the water. CHN furthered the public's connection to our city's history by partnering with the Erie Canal Museum to offer programming highlighting the role of the canal in the women's rights and abolitionist movements.

CHN values the future.

Just as the Erie Canal and Genesee River shaped the future of Rochester, CHN is shaping the future of these waterways by providing increased awareness and access and ensuring their sustainability. With generous support from donors, CHN's innovative work will continue to highlight the city's history with the water, shape the city's culture, and connect people and ideas. As we honor this history, we can't wait for you to be part of our future.

Anita O'Brien

Executive Director

Rochester Accessible Adventures

The thought of gliding along a waterway often brings to mind the feeling of the breeze, the gentle hum of the motor, and the excitement of spotting wildlife along the shore. But for individuals with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities and medical conditions, a boat tour often raises deeper questions: Will I be able to board safely? Will I be comfortable? Will I be able to enjoy the experience?



Corn Hill Navigation (CHN) is actively ensuring that the answer to these questions is a resounding yes. The newest vessel, *Riverie*, plays a key role in increasing accessible experiences on the waterways. Designed with no-step entry and a larger, more accessible restroom, it prioritizes ease and comfort.

I am particularly pleased with how CHN's core inclusion team has adopted a "lens of inclusion" so they can implement practices that go beyond just physical accessibility to meet a variety of needs of potential guests. They have assessed and improved their operational and programmatic elements, and are implementing protocols to ensure staff are trained to welcome and assist all guests. Plans for audio enhancements for narration and sensory kits aboard both *Riverie* and *Sam Patch* will ensure that guests of all abilities can fully engage with the tour experience. CHN's website now features an Accessibility tab, which will expand to offer detailed information so visitors can plan their experience with confidence.

We are excited for our community and for tourists who visit the Rochester area! By taking these intentional steps, Corn Hill Navigation isn't just providing boat tours; they're fostering a truly inclusive adventure along the Genesee River and Erie Canal—where everyone is expected and welcomed.

David Beck

Founder, Smile Program for RCSD in Partnership with Rochester Education Foundation

Through the Smile Program, we have been providing fun learning experiences for RCSD elementary school students for 13 years. Over that time, one of the best decisions we made was to transition from having a few RCSD schools doing science on the *Sam Patch* and Erie Canal, to having the entire 5th grade class within the RCSD school system take the *Riverie* Science River Cruises. We are incredibly grateful to Corn Hill Navigation for making this opportunity possible!



Carter Remy *Environmental Education Specialist*

The Rochester City School District Science Cruises aboard *Riverie* provide an invaluable opportunity for students, particularly Black and Brown students, who may not otherwise have access to experiences like this. For many, it's their first time on a boat. Outside of this program, these students might not have the chance to interact with the Genesee River—an important part of their own community—due to barriers like the high cost of being on a boat, lack of transportation to a pier, or simply not knowing that opportunities like this exist.



Being on the water broadens their understanding of local waterways and their role in our ecosystem, while also fostering a sense of curiosity and stewardship. They see themselves as active participants in environmental conservation and science, rather than just observers. These trips not only build knowledge but also confidence, showing students that science isn't just something they read about—it's something they can do.

More importantly, these students don't just learn about what scientists do—they become scientists. The tests they conduct on the boat are the same tests real scientists use to study water quality and ecosystems, allowing them to see themselves in the field. This experience reinforces that being a scientist isn't just a "White person's job." They get to actively participate in data collection and recording, essential parts of scientific work, while also engaging in citizen science—contributing to real-world environmental research. In doing so, they take on the role of the next generation of conservationists, understanding that they belong in these spaces and have a vital role in protecting their environment.

This is an amazing program and I genuinely love seeing the impact it has on youth and seeing them being active in their community and being a scientist as well.

Kaeti Stoss *Environmental Education Specialist, Rochester Institute of Technology*

Being on the water allows [students] to observe the river's health firsthand, connect with the local watershed, and see the impact of pollution and conservation efforts in real time. This interactive approach fosters curiosity, critical thinking, and a stronger personal connection to environmental stewardship than a typical onshore experience. This program empowers the next generation to become environmental stewards, ensuring the long-term sustainability and vitality of the Genesee River for recreation, wildlife, and our future.

	2023	2024
Ticket Sales	\$235,717	\$383,798
Grants	\$113,800	\$168,844
Education Program Fees	\$64,080	\$86,578
Corporate & Individual Giving	\$29,191	\$74,956
Charter Income	\$50,454	\$72,166
Food/Beverage Sales	\$27,966	\$60,242
Gift Card Sales & Other Income	\$4,485	\$21,688
Loan Proceeds	\$148,615	\$0
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Total Revenue:	\$674,308	\$868,272
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Seasonal Staff	\$226,432	\$216,891
Year-Round Staff	\$160,279	\$151,385
Operations & Programming	\$139,957	\$126,091
Insurance	\$54,610	\$50,812
Vessel Maintenance & Supplies	\$43,360	\$47,137
Loan Payments	\$34,253	\$84,567
Facilities	\$16,042	\$31,034
Pending Projects/Off-season	\$0	\$160,354
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Total Expenses:	\$674,933	\$868,272

2024 Revenue



- Ticket Sales
- Grants
- Education Program Fees
- Corporate & Individual Giving
- Charter Income
- Food/Beverage Sales
- Gift Card Sales & Other Income

2024 Expenses



- Seasonal Staff
- Year-Round Staff
- Operations
- Insurance
- Vessels
- Loan Payments
- Facilities



We are grateful for all our supporters

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