



2024 Yearbook



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Finding The Magic In The Messiness Of Making Change

A Message from the Executive Director

As I write this end-of-year letter, I'm surrounded by various objects and artifacts from our year. Our 8 80 Cities office space is situated in the unequivocally cool 401 Richmond St West, a beautiful red brick building with pristine white walls, colourful art, and imposing verdant plants that line the hallways. Our little corner of this cultural gem is currently a remarkable mess.

Spray paint, boxes, engagement boards, hula hoops, chalk, bubbles, stencils, traffic safety vests, luggage, string lights, receipts, sticky notes, clipboards, granola bars...and so many bags with a random array of curious items are strewn about.

It's a pretty telling picture of how this year has been. 2024 has taken our small but mighty team in a lot of different directions. It's also reminded me that our work is often messy, both literally and figuratively. When your organization's mission is to ignite action and challenge the status quo to create healthier, more equitable, and sustainable cities, you get pretty used to being in a state of friction. It's not easy to challenge existing complex systems and structures within transportation planning, public space management, and city building. We're often pushing up against rigid rules and regulations, policies and practices that are often designed to exclude and limit civic participation and slow progress.

The most powerful and fundamental currency of our work at 8 80 Cities is relationships. It's how any of this work gets done. And relationships are also messy.

We navigate and facilitate many different types of relationships at very different scales. We work with global and local partners, funders, clients, researchers, diverse stakeholders and interest

holders. We also work directly with community leaders, local anchor partners, residents, artists, advocates, and volunteers for our on-the-ground public space activation work. All these people who are part of our '8 80 ecosystem' come with their own unique lived experiences and perspectives, and their own strengths and capacities, as well as vulnerabilities.

While it's enough to make your head spin, it's exactly where you can find some of the magic that leads to positive change. We are often facilitating relationships across multiple types of silos and differences. We strategically situate ourselves right in the middle of the messiness and it's a thrilling and transformative place to be.

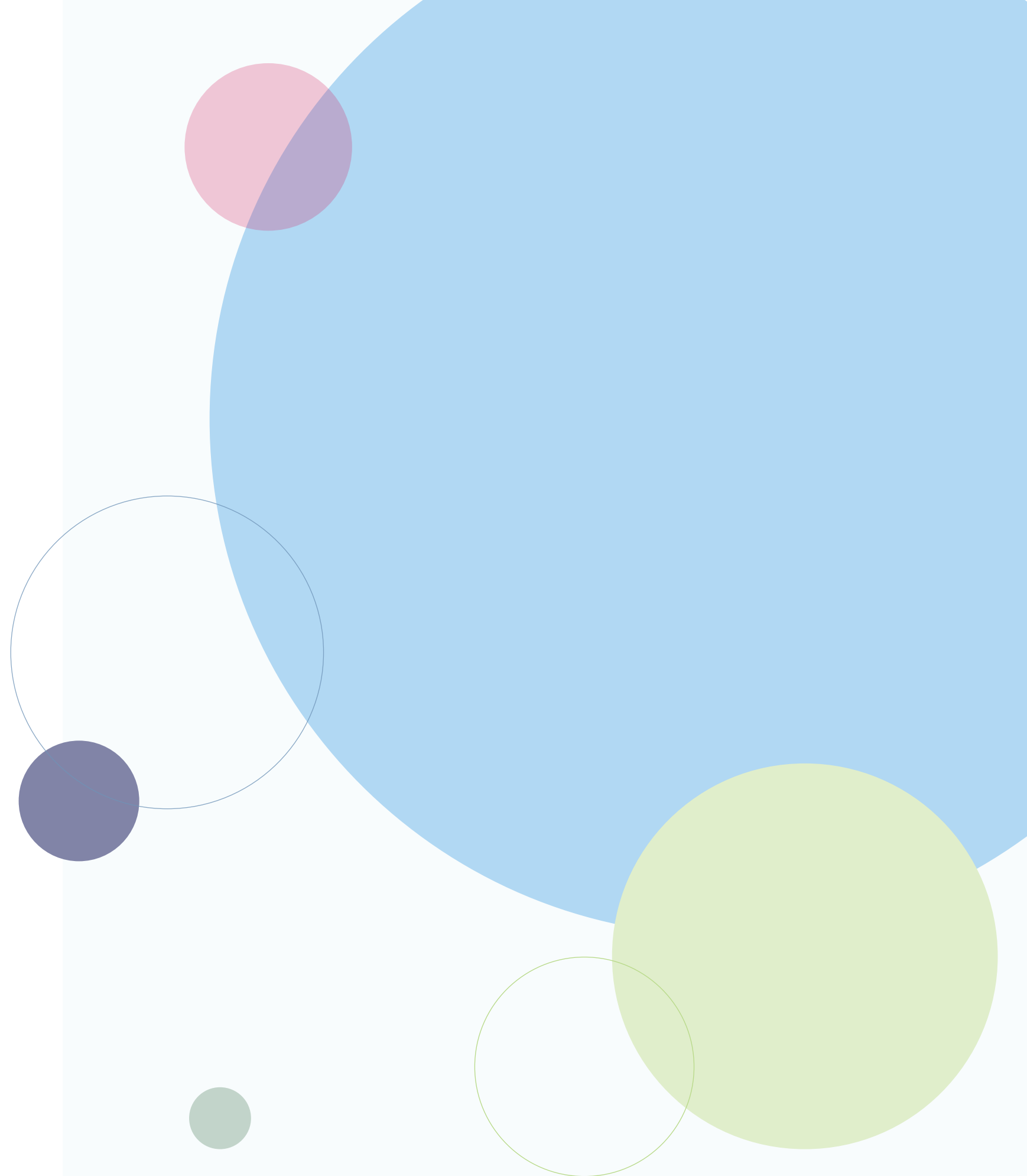
To me, 2024 was the year our team honed and embraced the magical messiness of our work. Despite being pulled in many different directions, our vision, strategy, and values kept us grounded and able to deliver one of our most impactful years as an organization.

Thank you to the amazing 8 80 Cities staff team that shows up with passion, grit, and empathy every day, to all our board members, funders, clients, and our many community champions, changemakers, participants, interns, and volunteers who support our work. We could not have done it without ALL of you.

Now it's time for us to tidy up this place and get ready for 2025!



Amanda O'Rourke
Executive Director, 8 80 Cities



Land Acknowledgement

8 80 Cities acknowledges that the land on which we are situated is the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, and Petun First Nations. These lands are the site of Treaty 13 and the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant — an agreement forged between the Anishinaabe Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to peaceably share resources around the Great Lakes.

We are mindful of broken covenants, violations of human and treaty rights, and affirm the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is our responsibility to actively interrogate and challenge settler-colonial systems of oppression through our work. We are committed to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Lands.

We Are 8 80 Cities!

We are guided by the simple but powerful idea that if everything we do in our cities is great for an 8 year old and an 80 year old, then it will be better for all people.

OUR MISSION

To ignite action and challenge the status quo to create healthier, more equitable, and sustainable cities for all people.

OUR VISION

Healthy, happy, and sustainable cities for people to grow up and grow old in; where all people have the right to safe and active mobility, welcoming and accessible public spaces, and inclusive city-building processes.



Right to Mobility

In an 8 80 community, every resident has the right to safe, accessible, and comfortable sidewalks, bike lanes and public transit systems.

The movement of people in a city is an essential aspect of modern life. Too often, urban transportation is planned with only a few types of users in mind. Sustainable transportation, which includes all forms of human powered movement, has been proven to be a successful model for healthier, safer and environmentally friendly neighbourhoods. An 8 80 friendly community is one where streets are well designed for safe walking and biking, and where public transportation is affordable, reliable and accessible.



Right to Public Space

In an 8 80 community, every resident has the right to accessible, high-quality, and dynamic parks and public spaces.

Public spaces are where cities come alive. When well-designed and supported, they allow individuals and groups to take ownership of their local spaces, creatively programming them to fit the needs of the communities they serve. Parks and green space are a critical means for urban residents to interact and connect with nature. They can be therapeutic to the sick, an adventure to the young and are a natural oasis for all. Parks and public spaces are not ‘nice to haves’ but are necessary components of any inclusive and healthy 8 80 community.



Right to Participate

In an 8 80 community, every resident has the right to participate in city building processes.

Everyone has a voice that deserves to be heard in city building initiatives. Too often, the voices of the most vulnerable, i.e. children, older adults, and lower income and racialized residents, are dismissed or altogether absent from civic initiatives. 8 80 neighbourhoods are ones where all residents actively participate in shaping and utilizing their urban environment. When all residents collaborate in city building, the resulting community systems and built environment are inherently inclusive.



Responsibility to the Land

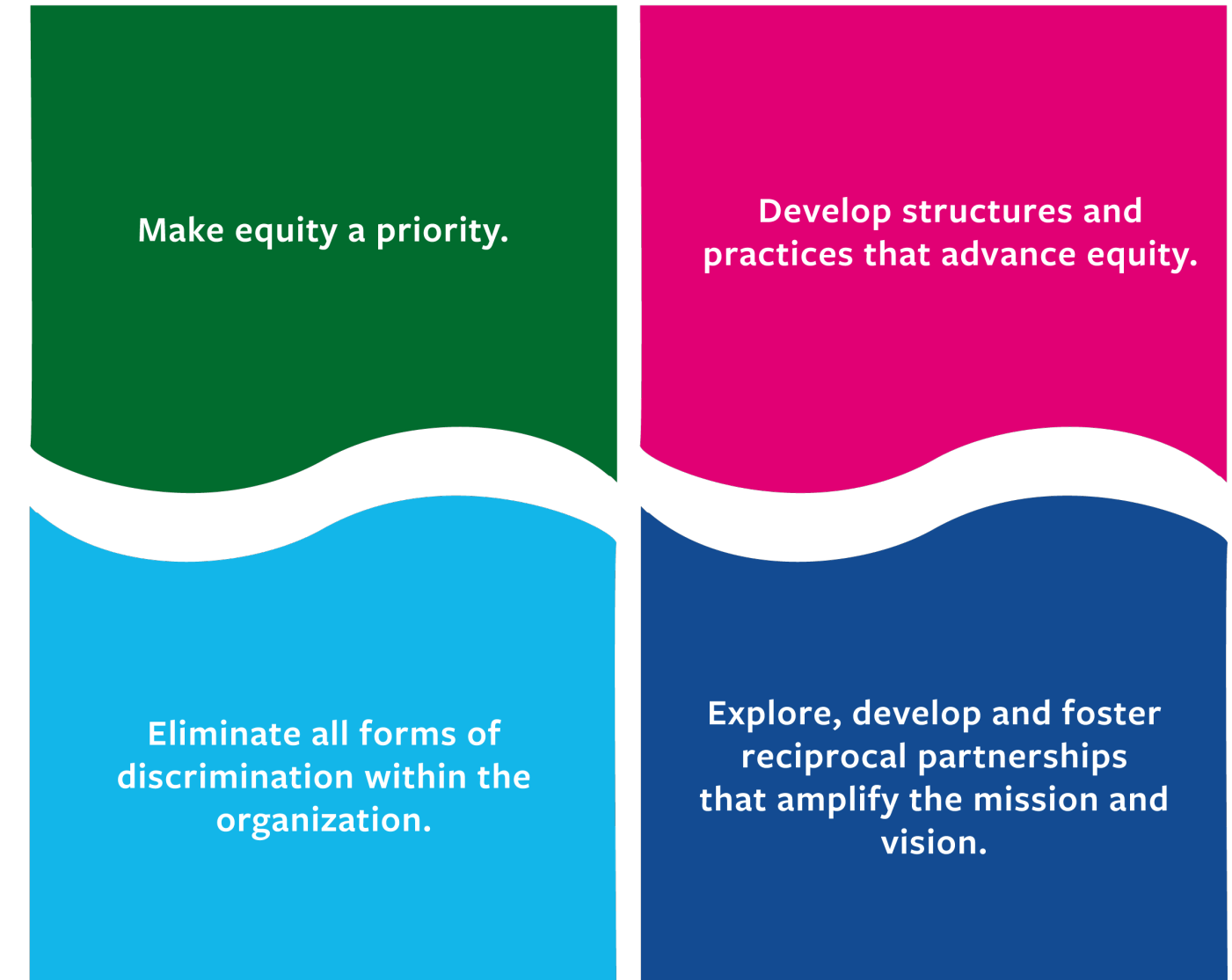
In an 8 80 community, every resident has the responsibility to the land and each other.

While our mission is centred on a people-first approach, we understand the interconnectedness of all living things and that the health of the land, water and air around us and our cities is quintessential to our very survival.

Our Commitments to Equity

We view equity as a direction, not a destination.

Our Equity Framework



5-Year Strategic Plan

2022-2027 Strategic Goals

1 Advancing Equity

We will use our equity framework to prioritize, plan and deliver all projects, programs, and services.

2 Strengthen Relationships & Build Trust

We play a unique, supportive, and complementary role in “building back better” strategies for municipalities and the non-profit sector in the GTHA.

3 Spark New Ideas & Accelerate Action

We will spark new ideas, innovate, and demonstrate change to accelerate action to build stronger, resilient and sustainable communities in the GTHA and beyond.

4 Build a Resilient Funding Infrastructure

We will expand the adoption of the 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic Tool and 8 80 Cities’ programs and services to enable GTHA leaders to shape informed plans and actions for improving the equity and sustainability of their community.

The following are commitments we made as an organization as part of our new Strategic Plan.

1

We understand the important role social identities such as gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, gender expression, ethnic and cultural background, and economic status play in a person’s experience navigating public space

2

We will be advocates of public spaces, urban mobility, and community engagement practices that are designed to welcome and serve all communities, including newcomers, immigrants and racialized communities.

3

We will better educate ourselves, our partners and our clients to deconstruct the systemic racism that can be perpetrated by urban planning practices and urban form.

4

We will do more to centre the experiences of Indigenous, Black and racialized people in our work to create equitable streets and public spaces.

5

Our impacts, through our services and program design, will be responsive to the most marginalized in communities, with empathy and through an emphasis on social solidarity.

6

The impacts and outcomes of our engagement and advocacy processes will be informed by and will be responsive to social determinants of health, including mental, physical, emotional and environmental health.

7

While our mission is centred on a people-first approach, we understand the interconnectedness of all living things, and that the health of the land, water and air around us and our cities is quintessential to our very survival.

Board of Directors

Gil Penalosa
Founder and Chair

Terms completed in 2024:

Ana-Francisca de la Mora
Director

Kay Matthews
Director

Rafael Vargas
Treasurer

David Roberts
Director

Megan Meaney
Director

Shannon Holness
Director

Jerry Koh
Director

Nadha Hassen
Director

Suelyn Knight
Director

Judy Noordermeer
Director

Nyasha Harper-Michon
Director

Yvonne Young
Director

Who we are



Amanda O'Rourke
Executive Director



Shannon Lawrence
Director of Programs
and Development



Camila Uriona
Manager of Communications
& Administration



Verina Muharremi
Finance Manager



Jiya Benni
Senior Project Manager



Joanna Delos Reyes
Project Manager



Tennesha Joseph
Project Manager



Praneti Kulkarni
Project Manager



Raisa Hossain
Project Coordinator



Jayne Armstrong
Project Manager



Deborah McKeon
Finance Manager

Thank you to past staff
for your support in 2024!

8 80 Support

Zane Silk
Student Intern

Sarah Edo
Community Engagement and
Placemaking Coordinator

Pedram Kohan
Student Volunteer

Ashley Isaacs
Student Intern

Lucy Mackinnon
Summer Project Assistant

Tobi Ayaji
Student Volunteer

Swati Dash
Student Intern

Jazmine Lawrence
Summer Project & Design
Assistant

Natalia Joffre
Volunteer

Mateo Higgins
Office Maintenance Support

Sanjna Urval
Volunteer

Partners & Co-Creators

AARP State Offices (CA, FL, KS, NV, ND, OH, OR, RI, SD, TX)
Access Alliance Multicultural Health Services
Age Friendly Reno
Bismarck Burleigh Public Health
BLOXHUB
Brampton Library
Brampton Street Team
Canadian Urban Institute
CARSP (Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals)
Centre for Urban Ecology
Chinatown Community Land Trust
Cities for Better Health
City of Burnaby
City of Copenhagen
City of Helsinki
City of Mississauga
City of Montreal
City of Providence
City of Saint John
City of Toronto
City of Toronto Indigenous Affairs Office
City of Toronto Public Health
Cooksville Business Improvement Association
CycleTO
Downtown Brampton BIA

Downtown Brampton BIA
Downtown Sioux Falls (DTSF)
Earthscape Play
ERA
Foundation for Social Connection
Friends and Families for Safe Streets
Gehl
Healthy Places by Design
Helpful Places
Humber College
Indus Community Services
Jay Pitter Placemaking
Kenneth Balfaat
Lindsay Kretchmer (Swooping Hawk)
Logic
Ministry of Transportation
Infrastructure (BC)
Muslims in Public Space
Na Ma Res
O2
OPHEA
Park People
Park(ing) Day Toronto
Peel Region Public Health
plazaPOPS
Re-set
Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)
Sheridan College
Tabitha Shurgold
TAS Impact

TCAT
The Indigenous Network
Toronto Community Housing
Toronto District School Board
Enhanced Language Training
TransLink
University of Montreal
University of Toronto
Urban Minds
Vancouver Coastal Health
WalkTO
Waterfront Toronto
Wellesley Institute
Winter Cycling Congress
World Urban Parks

Funders & Clients

AARP Livable Communities
Balsam Foundation
Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Canadian Urban Institute
City of Brampton
City of London
City of Toronto
Green Communities Canada
Knight Foundation
Public Health Agency of Canada
Simon Fraser University
United Way of Greater Toronto
University of Guelph
University of Montreal
University of New Brunswick

2024

2024 Communication Highlights

 **37,933**
Website sessions

 **16**
Blogposts

 **12**
Newsletter issues

70%
NEW
Web Visitors

Website
Visitors by
Country



39%



37%



24%

7
News
Features

5
Conference
Presentations

7,490
Newsletter subscribers



6,252
LinkedIn followers



5,385
Instagram followers



7,569
Facebook followers



11,928
X (Twitter) followers





Tailored Programs

Knight Emerging City Champions

Location: Toronto, Ontario
Funder: Knight Foundation

After a three-year hiatus, our Knight Emerging City Champions relaunched this year, engaging 20 young civic innovators in a Toronto-based and in-person studio. The champions came in from Akron OH, Charlotte NC, Detroit MI, Macon GA, Miami FL, Philadelphia PA, San Jose CA, and St. Paul MN.

KECC is a fellowship and micro-grant program for young civic innovators with bold ideas for developing engaged, inclusive and equitable communities toward a more effective democracy. This program is powered by 8 80 Cities and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

20
champions
engaged



3
day in-
person
studio

Supported By



Ontario Community Changemakers

Location: Toronto, Ontario
Funder: Balsam Foundation

This was the fourth year of our Ontario Community Changemakers program, a leadership and micro-grant program for people with bold ideas to activate public space, enhance civic engagement, and foster social inclusion in their communities. The program kicks off with a Toronto-based and in-person studio.

The 2024 cohort includes 30 changemakers, aged 19 years up, from across Ontario. The program is powered by 8 80 Cities with funding from Balsam Foundation



Supported By

BALSAM FOUNDATION



30
changemakers
engaged

2
day in-
person
studio





Community Engagement & Activations

Nelson Square Pocket Park

Location: **Brampton, Ontario**
 Client: **City of Brampton**

In 2023, the City of Brampton, the Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Area and 8 80 Cities partnered together again to transform the Nelson Square Surface Parking Lot to create new comfortable and enjoyable programming and public space downtown that is seasonally responsive, and increase foot traffic and lingering activity downtown throughout the summer, fall and winter.

The Nelson Square Pocket Park was formerly 5 parking spots on a deteriorating asphalt lot that was reimagined into a turf-covered accessible corner of the downtown that quickly became a place to meet friends and hang out with family.

100%
 rated "good" or
 "excellent" for
 playfulness and
 socialness

5x
 increase
 in seniors

19x
 increase in
 children,
 ages 0-14

20%
 increase in
 people feeling
 safer

150+
 people sharing
 their travel
 experiences

Location: **Scarborough, Ontario**
 Funder: **City of Toronto**

In collaboration with The City of Toronto, 8 80 Cities planned and installed a temporary pop-up at the intersection of Ellesmere Road and Military Trail near the Scarborough Campus of the University of Toronto. The pop-up activated the public spaces near the intersection, making it safer and more enjoyable for all users.

Supported By



Supported By



8 80 TowerPOPS

Location: Cooksville, Mississauga and Rockcliffe Smythe, Toronto
Funder: Public Health Agency of Canada and United Way Greater Toronto

8 80 TowerPOPS is a 3-year-long multi-disciplinary project that aims to activate underused spaces close to large clusters of high-density apartment towers to improve physical health outcomes for the community.

The neighbourhoods of Cooksville, Mississauga and Rockcliffe-Smythe, Toronto have been chosen as the target of TowerPOPS as these tower communities characteristically have low access to quality public space to promote and facilitate social gathering and physical activity. TowerPOPS will introduce play, socialization and amenity spaces, informed by robust community engagement and co-creation.



1 site in each of the 2 communities identified!



650+ individuals engaged



43 events, walks, and meetings

Supported By

Public Health Agency of Canada

Canada

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH

United Way Greater Toronto

ERA

plaza POPS

earthscape





Training & Workshops

National Active School Streets Initiative

Location: National (16 communities in 6 provinces (BC, AB, MB, ON, QC, NB))
Funder: Public Health Agency through Green Communities Canada

The National Active School Streets Initiative (NASSI) is a nationwide project to create car-free environments in front of schools at the start and/or end of the school day in 15 communities across six provinces – British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick, particularly within priority populations, including low-income, racialized and/or new-Canadians.

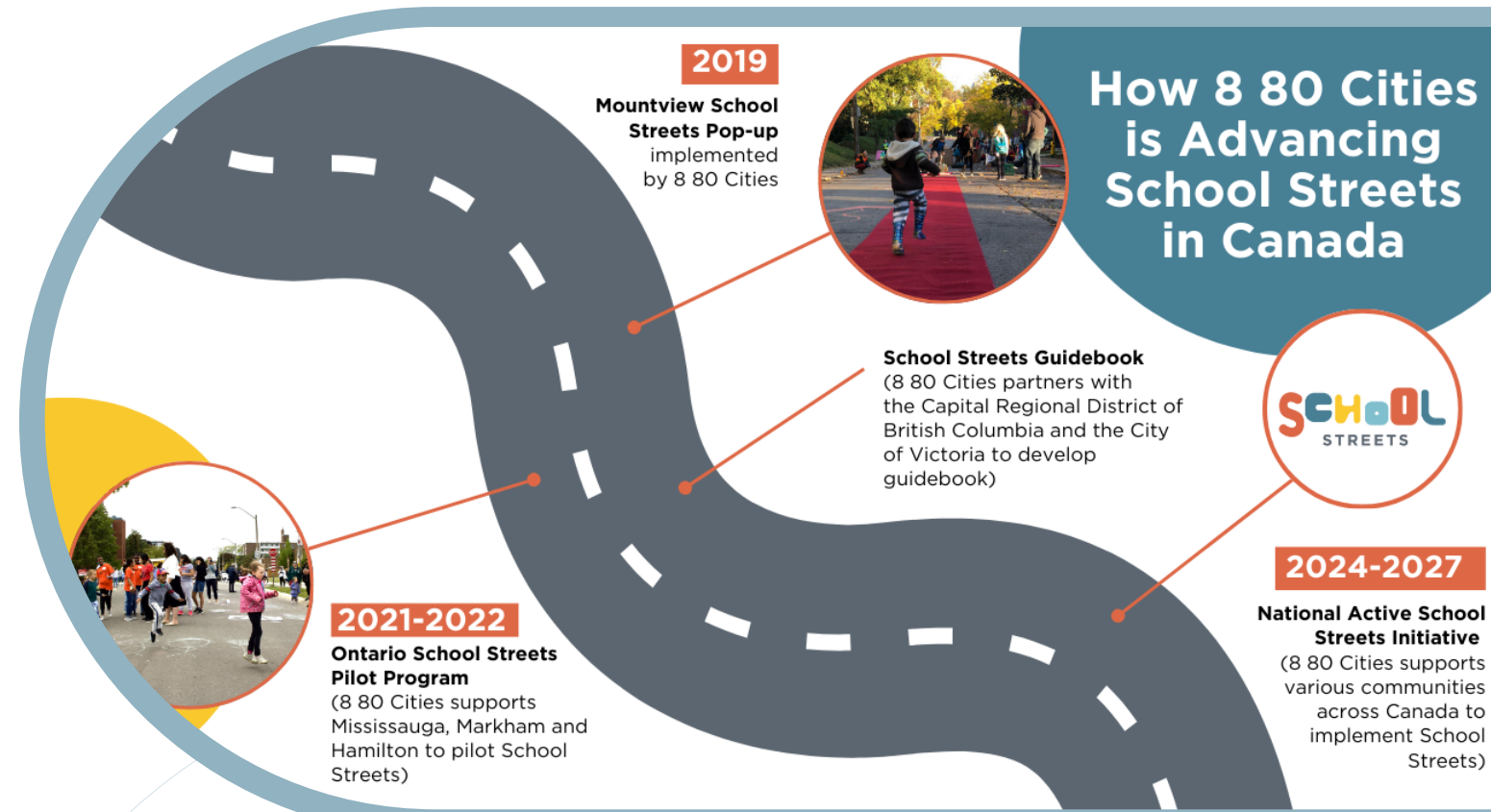
Established a community of practice between **20+** organizations



Supported By



How 8 80 Cities is Advancing School Streets in Canada



Training program started



Transform Yonge

Location: Toronto, Ontario
Client: City of Toronto

From February to April 2024, the City of Toronto's Major Projects and Public Consultation unit partnered with 8 80 Cities to plan an interactive installation for Transform Yonge, showcasing upcoming changes to Yonge St. ahead of the 2025 design process.

8 80 Cities led two workshops to co-create the concept for the activation. The first workshop, with City planning units, focused on logistics, feasibility, and expert input on activities and locations. The second session included City Councillor Lily Cheng, her team, and Business Improvement Area staff.

2
draft concept plans

Supported By



2
workshops



2
workshops inspiring staff to rethink engagement



London Engagement Workshop

Location: London, Ontario
Funder: City of London

8 80 Cities facilitated a two-part workshop for City of London staff, starting with a virtual presentation on inclusive engagement. The session covered the 8 80 Rules of Engagement and aligned with the City's Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Framework. This was followed by an in-person workshop in London, ON, where 8 80 Cities helped staff, including community connectors, translate community engagement data into actionable steps.

Supported By



2024 Healthy Urban Policy Workshop

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Funder: Canadian Institutes of Health Research

This year, 8 80 Cities welcomed its second Canadian study group to Copenhagen through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Healthy Urban Policy Initiative.

We hosted four research teams from Toronto, Montreal, Saint John, and Burnaby in Copenhagen to experience and learn first-hand about promising practices and policies for active transportation and public space design that prioritize healthy equity as part of the 2024 Healthy Urban Policy Workshop. At its core, this initiative is meant to bridge the gap and promote collaboration between Canadian researchers, decision-makers, and city leaders.

The 4-day immersive workshop provides research teams with the inspiration and capacity to develop action plans to address specific needs in their home cities.

Supported By



4
Canadian
research

4
day
immersive
workshop



AARP Technical Assistance Programs

Location: Various States, United States

Funder: AARP Livable Communities

Partners: AARP States Offices (North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, Rhode Island, Nevada, California, Oregon, Ohio, Kansas, Florida)

8 80 Cities partnered with the state offices of California, Oklahoma, Florida, Kansas, Texas, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Rhode Island to host interactive workshops and presentations and support the execution of age-friendly activations and public space evaluations.

Supported By



79%
met
someone
new



Bismarck Block Party

Location: Bismarck, North Dakota

Funder: AARP Livable Communities

Partners: Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health & AARP North Dakota

Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health, AARP North Dakota and 8 80 Cities collaborated to host a neighbourhood block party in Bismarck, North Dakota. The free event effectively transformed public spaces into places for social connection and play amongst neighbors. Through engaging programming and playful design, the event aimed to generate appetite among residents for future events like this.

94%
were
active

83%
felt a sense of
belonging



Rhode Island Park(ing) Day

Location: Providence, Rhode Island

Funder: AARP Livable Communities

Partners: AARP Rhode Island

AARP Rhode Island and 8 80 Cities collaborated on a Park(ing) Day event to celebrate intergenerational connection, play and livability for all ages with these goals in mind:

1. Draw attention to the importance of creating livable, inclusive, age-friendly streets and public spaces.
2. Provide a platform for dialogue on creating livable, equitable, age-friendly streets.
3. Engage residents (especially high school students and seniors) in activating the space.
4. Build and strengthen relationships between diverse partners.

100+
visitors



11
American
communities
engaged



Looking ahead..

2024 was a year of various rewarding achievements for 8 80 Cities. As 2025 kicks off, we are continuing our mission to create healthier, more equitable, and sustainable cities for all.

We look forward to new partnerships and collaborations, new projects and to strengthening ties with the communities where we are already having an impact.

Thank you to our clients, partners, board members and volunteers for your continued support and dedication to helping us build better cities for all!

The 8 80 Cities Team



We believe that if everything we do
in our cities is great for an 8 year old
and an 80 year old, then it will be
better for all people.

Explore what we do.

