



Wintermission Project Brief

Wintermission will coach three U.S. cities to plan, pilot, and implement creative solutions to increase social interaction and physical activity among children, newcomer families, and other vulnerable communities in public spaces during the coldest, darkest months of the year.

The project will train and advise three interdisciplinary teams of leaders to implement winter-friendly solutions for their respective cities. The teams will be selected through a competitive application process led and facilitated by 8 80 Cities. The training begins with a convening at the Winter Cities Shake Up conference in Saskatoon, SK on January 23-26, 2019.

8 80 Cities and their project partners (National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, and the Children and Nature Network) will then spend 18 months with each participating city to, first, host creative community engagement activities to collect public feedback and ideas about winter, and second, implement pilot projects to bring those ideas to life and test new winter-focused designs and programs in public spaces. Public spaces include but are not limited to parks, civic squares, libraries, community centers, school grounds, streets, and sidewalks –places that are free to access by anyone no matter their age, ability, or income level.

These activities will inform a winter city strategy to guide each city in reducing social isolation, specifically among vulnerable groups, through public space improvements in the future. 8 80 Cities will compile the lessons learned from the three participating cities in an online 8 80 Winter City Toolkit that will serve as the central knowledge and networking hub for winter city planning in North America.

Increasing Public Life in Winter Cities

Public life is broadly defined as social interactions that naturally happen when people spend time in public spaces such as parks, plazas, streets, and sidewalks. [Research](#) shows that public life declines in winter as fewer people venture outdoors to spend time in parks and public spaces. This contributes to lower rates of physical activity and social interaction which disproportionately affect vulnerable populations like children and newcomers.

Cities have the capacity to lead the charge in providing viable options for people to enjoy public spaces and public life during the time of year when people feel least inspired to do so. Building a culture of public life outside in winter, also helps build a culture of public life in all seasons. The public realm presents the greatest opportunity to create socially connected and physically active communities throughout the entire year. Streets, roads, sidewalks, parks, plazas, libraries, school grounds, and community centers belong to



everyone. We intend to leverage these publicly owned civic assets to reduce social isolation and enhance social and physical activity during the winter season.

Reducing Social Isolation in Winter

Even though most cities in the northern United States experience winter for substantial portions of the year, their built environments do little to embrace their climate. The lack of winter-friendly design and programming in public spaces discourages residents from spending time in public spaces during the cold season. This tendency can create a sense of social isolation which contributes to civic lethargy.

While some people may welcome the slowness and quietude that winter brings, others can feel trapped, isolated, and vulnerable. [Research indicates](#) that seasonal affective disorder (SAD) affects about 6 percent of the US population each year, 80 percent of whom are women. Those living further away from the equator are more likely to experience SAD. Symptoms of SAD include depression, social anxiety, a desire to avoid social contact, lethargy, sleep deprivation, etc. An additional 10 percent – 20 percent experience a mild form of SAD. Physician-recommended ways to prevent the effects of SAD include light therapy, increased exercise, and spending more time outside.

Supporting Children and Newcomers

[Children in particular](#) spend less time participating in unstructured play when the days are short. [Older adults](#) are most likely to use streets and sidewalks for their leisure physical activity, yet they [report](#) the most difficulty getting around in the winter.

Ethnic minority groups and newcomers in the US also have different relationships with winter. The clearest form of exclusion of ethnic minorities in winter culture is within the area of winter sports. Skiing, snowboarding, hockey, and curling are all sports that are dominated by whites. There are few efforts to increase access to these winter sports among ethnic minorities, and even fewer efforts to identify culturally-relevant ways for different ethnic groups to uniquely celebrate and connect to winter. Many newcomer settlement agencies offer classes on how to “survive” winter. While these are extremely important, we believe cities can go beyond helping people survive during winter, and instead dedicate efforts to helping people thrive during winter.

Through Wintermission, we want to bring warmth and a sense of community outside for people of all ages, and especially for children, newcomer families, and other vulnerable groups. Projects implemented as part of Wintermission will engage residents to not only enjoy public spaces during wintertime but also encourage citizens to be engaged with their communities throughout the year.





Project Partners

This project will be led by **8 80 Cities**. As a non-profit organization, we are led by a simple but powerful philosophy: if everything we did in our cities prioritized the safety and health of 8-year-olds and 80-year-olds, then we would create successful cities for all. 8 80 Cities has worked in 37 countries and over 200 cities across the world. We are international experts in creating safe, accessible, and engaged communities.

Key collaborators and partners include:

Child and Nature Network: The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) is leading the movement to connect all children, their families and communities to nature through innovative ideas, evidence-based resources and tools, broad-based collaboration and support of grassroots leadership. C&NN will partner on developing and delivering engagement strategies for children. Their expertise and participation will maximize project impacts on reducing social isolation for children and caregivers.

National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (NLCI): Founded in 1924, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. NLCI, as the education and research affiliate of NLC, has extensive experience in designing and successfully implementing research, community assessment, leadership training, and technical assistance initiatives. The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a special entity within NLCI launched in 2000, helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities. The YEF Institute has provided technical assistance to hundreds of cities on topics such as health and wellness, early childhood development, economic opportunity, and youth and adult connections. Some of these technical assistance initiatives involve significant pass-through funds and intermediary responsibilities. Virtually all such initiatives have led to the publication of how-to or lessons learned reports and guidebooks enjoying wide use among municipal governments and city partners nationwide.

The Network of Winter City Champions will provide ongoing guidance to the core project team, and provide mentorship and technical support to the Winter City Vanguard teams through webinars and conference calls. The Network will be a multidisciplinary and international group of thought leaders and decision makers who are leading the field of winter city planning, programming, design and policy. Confirmed members of the Network include:



Susan Holdsworth, WinterCity Manager at the City of Edmonton:

As WinterCity Manager at the City of Edmonton, Susan oversees the implementation of the Edmonton's WinterCity Strategy across all departments and municipal programs. Susan will co-develop the Winter City Study Tour agenda, managing on-the-ground logistics, and co-hosting the tour in Edmonton.

J.P. Ouellette, Chief Administrative Officer at the Town of Cochrane:

Cochrane is a small town in Northern Ontario with a population of 5,400. 8 80 Cities collaborated with J.P. Ouellette and the Town of Cochrane in 2014 on the innovative Doable Neighbourhood Project, which supported a series of new programs and initiatives to encourage social interaction and physical activity. J.P. will provide expertise in scaling policies and programs to the small-town context.

Tina Saaby, City Architect at the City of Copenhagen:

The City of Copenhagen is widely recognized as one of the most livable, people-friendly cities in the world. They have achieved this status, in no small part, due to policies, design guidelines, public realm programs, and bike lane maintenance programs that acknowledge the importance of winter. As City Architect, Tina Saaby oversees Copenhagen's urban planning and urban design policies to ensure they comply with the city's high standard of all-season living.

Thomas B. Randrup, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU):

Thomas is a professor at SLU and holds a PhD in Landscape Planning from the University of Copenhagen. He specializes in urban forestry, including parks and green spaces. Thomas has an intimate understanding of how seasonality interacts with the design and maintenance of green infrastructure in cities. As an advisor, he will provide expertise on the infrastructure design and maintenance issues that are pertinent to creating safe and inviting public spaces in winter.

Patrick Coleman, Winter Cities Institute:

Patrick Coleman is the Executive Director of the Winter Cities Institute, which was organized to identify and promote the positive attributes of winter living, new concepts in architecture and urban design, success stories from those places that are thriving in the north. Much of the Wintermission project idea directly builds on the winter cities work that Patrick has been spearheading since the 1980s. As an advisor, Patrick will ensure that Wintermission's work will adhere to best practices, and that project activities will enhance and amplify, rather than replicate, the work of the Winter Cities Institute.

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