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A Look Back At 2023: Parking Lots, Plunges And Partnerships

A Message from the Executive Director

After you’ve written a few of these end-of-year letters, it gets harder to come up with a catchy headline that fully captures the year. Building off the momentum we gained in 2022, we were back on the ground in full force, re-engaging with diverse city and community partners to ignite action and challenge the status quo to create healthier, more equitable, and sustainable cities.

You might be thinking -parking lots- what’s that all about? This year, we demonstrated the tremendous possibilities of parking lots as an important public space asset, spaces that can support community connection, joy, and belonging with a little love, community organizing, and placemaking investment. Our team helped bring together diverse community partners to transform a parking lot in Cooksville, Mississauga, into a pop-up community market. We also reimagined six car parking spaces into a vibrant pop-up pocket park in Downtown Brampton with the support of city champions and community partners.

Plunges? We hosted two study trips to Copenhagen this year for city teams from Canada and the U.S., culminating in the (cold) harbour plunge! This is a great symbol of all that we at 8 80 Cities try to achieve on these trips. We want to push boundaries, strengthen trust and relationships, get participants in a creative and open mindset and work together to address some of our biggest city challenges. We hope that those memories, learning, and experiences on our immersive study trips provide an accelerator for translatable community-led actions from our participating teams. We can’t wait to see what you do with this Guelph, Saskatoon, Oshawa, Brandon, Detroit and Buffalo!

Finally, partnerships. There is not enough room to write all the amazing partnerships that we’ve had this year. I know people are often shocked when they find out our team is a small but mighty group of eight people. There’s no secret in how we do this. It’s not only because we have an amazing team, but we have an amazing team that understands the value of every single relationship, partnership and interaction we have as the foundational currency that advances our mission. Our work relies on the vast network of supporters, partners, board members, funders, clients, volunteers, students, interns, community changemakers, city champions, advocates, researchers and more who share a vision for a healthier and more equitable future for cities. For that, we are eternally grateful to all of you!!

This year was action packed one and a signal for much more to come in 2024! Take a look at some of our favourite project highlights of the year.

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.

**Our Mission**

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.

**Our Vision**

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.
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.

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.

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.

Our Commitments to Equity

We view equity as a direction, not a destination.

Our Equity Framework

Make equity a priority.

Develop structures and practices that advance equity.

Eliminate all forms of discrimination within the organization.

Explore, develop and foster reciprocal partnerships that amplify the mission and vision.
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 and city building processes. |
| 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. |

### 5-Year Strategic Plan

#### 2022-2027 Strategic Goals

| 1 | **Advancing Equity** |
| 2 | **Strengthen Relationships & Build Trust** |
| 3 | **Spark New Ideas & Accelerate Action** |
| 4 | **Build a Resilient Funding Infrastructure** |

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

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.
Who we are

Amanda O’Rourke
Executive Director

Jayne Armstrong
Project Manager

Tennesha Joseph
Project Coordinator

Deborah McKeon
Finance Manager

Jiya Benni
Admin. & Communications Manager

Shannon Lawrence
Director of Programs and Development

Camila Uriona
Director of Programs and Development

Board of Directors

Gil Penalosa
Founder and Chair

Rafael Vargas
Treasurer

Shannon Holness
Director

Nadha Hassen
Director

Kay Matthews
Director

Judy Noordermeer
Director

Suelyn Knight
Director

David Roberts
Director

8 80 Support

Shameel Chankar
Summer Intern

Lucy Mackinnon
Student Intern

Amira Babeiti
Summer Intern

Swati Panwar
Student Intern

Mateo Higgins
Cleaning Support

Thank You

Special thanks to all other past staff for your support in 2023!

Brandon Miles
Funders & Clients

AARP
Balsam Foundation
Brandon University
Canadian Institutes for Health Research
Canadian Urban Institute
City of Brampton
City of Toronto
Knight Foundation
New Horizons for Seniors
Ralph C. Wilson Foundation
Toronto Metropolitan University
Town of Caledon
TAS Impact
University of Saskatchewan
University of Ontario Institute Technology

Partners & Co-Creators

Abiola Idowu
Access Alliance
Algoma
BLOXHub
Brampton Library
Buffalo Parks
Cities Changing Diabetes
City of Brandon
City of Copenhagen
City of Guelph
City of Mississauga
City of Oshawa
City of Saskatoon
Cycle TO
Cycling Without Age
Detroit Riverfront
Downtown Brampton BIA
Evergreen
FFSS
Gehl
GPA
Green Communities Canada
Heart Commonos
Helpful Places
HPBD
Indus Community Services
ISUH
Jay Pitter Placemaking
KCAT
Kenneth Balfeat
Lindsay Kretchmer/
Swooping Hawk
MUEC
Muslims in Public Space
OCChangemakers
Park People
Placemaking Canada
plazaPOPs
Queen’s University
Roots Community Services
Shawn Howe
Sheridan College
TCAT
The Indigenous Network
Universite de Montreal
University of Toronto
Urban Minds
WalkTO
Waterfront Toronto
Woodgreen Community Services
WUP
YMCA Greater Toronto

Engagement

AARP State Offices – RI, CA, WA, NC, NY
BuildingUP
Caledon Area Families for Inclusion (CAFFI)
Caledon Communities Services
Caledon Parent-Child Centre (CPCC)
Chinese Association of Mississauga
City of Anchorage
City of Junea
Community Gardens Communities of Practice
COSTI Immigrant Services
Dam Youth Drop-In Centre
Denver Urban Gardens
Downtown Whitby BIA
Eagle Spirit of the Great Waters
Erin Mills Youth Centre
Family Transition Place
Foundation for Social Connection
Friends of Kensington Market
GenWell
Gotham Park
JFL Hope Centre
Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
marketcityTO
MLSE
Muslim Council of Peel
OBIAA
Peel Multicultural Council
Peel Regional Diversity Roundtable
Placer Resource District
Punjabi Community Health Services
Renton Seniors Centre
Shorefast
T.L Kennedy High School
The Indigenous Network
Town of Mount Airy
U of T Public Life Students

Conferences & Webinars

- Building Connected Communities Conference, Harvard Human Flourishing Program, Boston
- Canadian Human Connection Conference
- Change for Good Roads Podcast
- Cities for Everyone with Gil, 8 80 Cities
- Flourishing Neighbourhoods Conference, NYC
- International Society for Urban Health Congress, Atlanta
- Ontario Business Improvement Association Conference
- Park People Conference
- Parks and Recreation Ontario Forum
- Planning Institute of Australia National Congress, Adelaide
- Urbanistica Podcast
2023
By the Numbers

Our Influence

12 Newsletter Issues
7,842 LinkedIn followers
90% NEW Web Visitors
18 Blog Posts
15 News Features
59,679 Website Sessions
12,774 Twitter (X) followers
32% 22% 46% Website Visitors by Country
7,528 Facebook followers
4,751 Instagram followers
7,842 LinkedIn followers

Our Influence

12 Newsletter Issues
7,842 LinkedIn followers
90% NEW Web Visitors
18 Blog Posts
15 News Features
59,679 Website Sessions
12,774 Twitter (X) followers
32% 22% 46% Website Visitors by Country
7,528 Facebook followers
4,751 Instagram followers
7,842 LinkedIn followers
Canadian projects
Nelson Square Pocket Park

Location: Brampton, Ontario
Client: City of Brampton

The Nelson Square Pocket Park builds on the momentum, strengthened capacity, and relationships from Activate Downtown Brampton 2022 to continue to strategically knit these important public spaces into a healthy and vibrant public realm network. The Nelson Square Pocket Park’s goal is to leverage the community engagement data and learnings from ADB 2022 to inform the pop-up placemaking activation for Nelson Garage Surface Parking Lot at 20 George Street North.

Cooksville Pop-Up Market

Location: Cooksville, Missisauga
Funder: TAS Developers
Partners: Heart Comonos, Cooksville Community Hub and TAS Developers

The Cooksville Pop-Up Market and Gathering was an event to activate a disused parking lot with community programmers. The day held over 40 vendors, one ice cream truck, three musical performances and one Bollywood dance class.

6 parking spots transformed from concrete to green space designed for play and relaxation

200+ disused parking spaces transformed into a vendor market

40+ vendors involved
The City of Toronto acquired the expertise of the 8 80 Cities’ team to conduct a series of public life studies at the Western Beaches to uncover insights into how visitors currently move through the space, the types activities they engage in and how they would like to see it improved. With the help of over 50+ volunteers, we collected quantitative and qualitative data that will be used to inform the Western Beaches Public Realm Plan and make the space better for all users!

Ontario Community Changemakers
(Year 3)

Location: Ontario, Canada
Funder: Balsam Foundation

Ontario Community Changemakers (OCC) is an exciting micro-grant program created for young Ontario residents to help spark new ideas and invigorate change in their local communities. Now in its third year, the program has supported 60 young leaders from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences to deliver their own creative projects that activate public space, enhance civic engagement, and/or foster social inclusion. Over the past three years the program has elevated new voices in city building and supported bold projects that strengthen the wellbeing of communities. The program aims to go beyond capital “P” placemaking and instead looks to elevate the voices of those who the placemaking and urban planning fields typically leave out. This program is regarded as truly unique and as filling a gap in the funding landscape. After three years, we have seen the program beginning to take on an identity of its own, and the networks between past, present and future changemakers are being made and leveraged all the time. We have also seen that changemakers are beginning to take on the identity of being a “changemaker”, this is a critical element of the program as so often those working on social justice projects or those building their own projects don’t know what to call themselves or how to market their work. We see this program as providing the legitimacy for changemakers to be able to go out with confidence, engage community and grow their projects. We were very exited to host the first fully in person studio this year as the program initially launched during the pandemic. Bringing all the changemakers together in Toronto was a wonderful experience, we have been so inspired by the work of this year’s cohort. You can read more about the program and the specific projects at ontariocommunitychangemakers.org
The Town of Caledon acquired engagement support from 8 80 Cities to begin an introductory cultural placemaking campaign aimed at better understanding what makes Caledon a great place to work, live and play for people of all backgrounds.

**Illuminate Caledon**

**Location:** Caledon, Ontario  
**Client:** Town of Caledon

The Town of Caledon acquired engagement support from 8 80 Cities to develop activities for a facilitated conversational workshop with the Town’s community service agencies and organizations to better plan for the anticipated transition from a two-tier to a single-tier municipality.

**Caledon Community Services Workshop**

**Location:** Caledon, Ontario  
**Client:** Town of Caledon

24 participants in attendance  
19 different community organizations

50+ seniors from the Caledon Senior Services participated in a brainstorming workshop!

The Town of Caledon engaged 8 80 Cities to develop activities for a facilitated conversational workshop with the Town’s community service agencies and organizations to better plan for the anticipated transition from a two-tier to a single-tier municipality.

**Activating Humber River Centre**

**Location:** Caledon, Ontario  
**Client:** Town of Caledon

The Town of Caledon acquired the support of 8 80 Cities to further engage with the local business and entrepreneurship community to understand specific needs for programming and facility activations in the new Humber River Centre.

**Caledon Active Transportation Master Plan**

**Location:** Caledon, Ontario  
**Client:** Town of Caledon

The Town of Caledon acquired the technical support of Alta Planning + Design and the community engagement support of 8 80 Cities. Community engagement is important when crafting an Active Transportation Master Plan to ensure the vision of the community is captured and reflected.

200+ people engaged in focused interviews, workshops & canvassing

35 survey participants  
6 1:1 interviews with local business owners

**Caledon**

Community Services  
Workshop

**Supporting**

**SUPPORTED BY**

Town of Caledon
This year, 8 80 Cities was very excited to re-launch our Copenhagen Study Tour. The tour was created in 2014 to inspire city leaders to adapt Copenhagen’s promising practices for enhancing public life. Since then, 8 80 Cities has hosted over 100 urban decisionmakers on a five-day tour of one of the happiest, healthiest, and most engaged cities in the world. 8 80 Cities curates a week of engaging lectures, planning workshops and walking and cycling tours featuring some of Copenhagen’s best and brightest urbanists. Study Tour participants are immersed in Danish culture and experience firsthand a city dedicated to putting people first. This year we hosted two delegations.

In 2019, 8 80 Cities and CIHR (Canadian Institutes for Health Research) embarked on a bold program to foster connections and bridge the gap between Canadian researchers, decision makers and city leaders on immersive study workshops under the mandate of the Healthy Cities Research Initiative. This was the first program of its kind and was run as a pilot project. The theme of the Healthy Urban Policy Implementation Workshops established at that time was active transportation and public space. With this focus, the City of Copenhagen was selected as an exemplary model that has developed promising practices in this field. The CIHR Healthy Cities Research Initiative (HCRI) launched a funding opportunity in 2022, in partnership with 8 80 Cities, focused on implementing healthy urban policy. At its most fundamental level, healthy cities research depends on partnerships between researchers, municipalities, and community organizations to identify needs and co-design projects to help address those needs. We were very excited to be able to bring the first Canadian study group to Copenhagen in September 2023. We were joined by four city teams from Brandon, Manitoba, Saskatoon Saskatchewan, Oshawa, Ontario and Guelph, Ontario for 5 days in Copenhagen to experience the 8 80 immersive workshop.
Parks and Public Space Implementation Workshop

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Funder: Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation

We were also very lucky to bring two cities currently working on Waterfront Redevelopment projects, Detroit, and Buffalo. Through funding received from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, we brought a group of 24 representatives to Copenhagen in October 2023, to focus on the transformation of Copenhagen's harbour, from an industrial Portland to a vibrant and integral part of the city's public realm. We learned how often the most innovative and beneficial solutions, come from the places of most scarcity and challenge. We saw how Copenhagen has taken the lessons of its 1990’s era harbour development and translated those into a new norther harbour development and we all left feeling very inspired about our own Waterfront cities!

AARP Technical Assistance Program

Location: Various States, U.S.A.
Funder: AARP Livable Communities

Partners:
Alaska (Juneau & Anchorage)
California (State wide)
Idaho (Soda Springs, Montpellier, Malad, Preston City)
New York (Brooklyn)
North Carolina (Mt. Airy)
Washington State (Renton)

880 Cities are the only Canadian Technical Assistance Providers for AARP Livable Communities. 880 Cities is proud to have worked with over 50 U.S. communities of all sizes realize their vision for age-friendly parks and public spaces.
AARP Community of Practice: Creating Community Gardens for All Ages

Location: Various States, U.S.A.
Funder: AARP Livable Communities

In addition to the new gardening guide, we supported over 100 community gardeners across America through workshops introducing great gardening practices and green-thumb based community engagement. Learn more here: www.880cities.org/portfolio_page/creating-community-gardens-for-people-of-all-ages/

Awards & Recognition

Mississauga Corporate Award
Community Partnership

We received this award for our work with the City of Mississauga and Green Communities Canada and the fantastic schools, school board, and community partners that helped make healthy, active and safe School Streets possible.

Brampton Urban Design Award
Public Realm, Public Space and Landscape Design

We received this honour for the engaging design that elevates the dialogue among place, people and landscape for Vivian Lane, an underutilized laneway in downtown Brampton. Thank you to the City of Brampton, our partners, artist Abiola Idowu, volunteers and the community at large for being part of this fantastic project!

Spacing Magazine Recognition
20 People We Love – Streets For All Ages

8 80 Cities Executive Director, Amanda O’Rourke, was recognized as one of 20 inspiring individuals who care deeply about urban issues and the future of Toronto.

SUPPORTED BY

AARP®
As we embark on new adventures in 2024, we at 8 80 Cities are excited and thankful for the work, opportunities, and partnerships ahead.

We look forward to growing even more and accomplishing the goals we have set as an organization. Thank you to our clients, partners, board members and volunteers for your continued support and dedication to helping us build better cities for all.

Here’s to a transformative and inspiring 2024!

- 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.