



880  
cities

2025  
Yearbook



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# The Year Of Practicing The Power Of Possibility

## A Message from the Executive Director

In a world of so much possibility, why can some things, sometimes seemingly simple things, things that have so many clear benefits to people and the planet, be perceived as impossible?

For example. Take our 8 80 concept. We believe it's possible to create cities where an 8-year-old can safely, independently, and comfortably walk or bike to school. We believe it's possible to create cities where an 80-year-old can safely walk in their neighbourhood every day, all year round (even on cold and snowy days and on the sunniest and hottest days). We believe it's possible to create cities where anyone, no matter their age, ability, race, ethnicity, or social status, can gather, connect, rest, play, and move safely and comfortably in public space.

Why, then, are we often met with a blank stare, a smile and “I like the idea, but is that really realistic or possible?”

I don't have an answer for why these concepts feel impossible to some. And I'm clever enough to know that there are likely many reasons that connect to big-picture societal, economic, and political systems and structures.

But here's what I do know. Embracing possibility takes practice.

We're very lucky that in our everyday work at 8 80 Cities, we get to dream up projects and programs that advance our mission. Even luckier when we successfully secure the resources to execute and deliver them. It's more than optimism; possibility is something we practice.

The delivery is always messy, imperfect, and iterative, but that process keeps us grounded and makes us better. Practice doesn't make perfect, but it makes possible, as the saying goes.

We put the work in. Some days are better than others. But we keep going with the clarity that our job is to challenge the status quo, to push ideas forward, to occupy the aspirational “possibility” space, and to bring as many people as we can into the fold. My reflections on what we practiced in 2025.

### Streets for people are possible

From inspiring places we've learned from, to re-imagining and re-designing streets from car dominated places to people places like our school streets programs, we know that

creating streets that invite people to socialize, connect, and be active is not only possible but they provide proven benefits to local business, community health, social and spatial equity, and the natural environment.

### Public space that builds connection and belonging is possible

Our work this year in transforming underused parking lots and in-between spaces in tower neighbourhoods into hubs of healthy activity is possible. Those places that are co-designed, co-activated and co-stewarded by residents spark community and cultural connection. We know that places that actively invite and create opportunities for people to shape the space in creative ways can foster a sense of belonging in unexpected ways, continuing to expand our understanding of what's possible.

### Design for dignity and human happiness is possible.

Our study trip to Helsinki this year reminded us that planning and designing for dignity, care, and happiness is possible. That eliminating chronic homelessness is possible. That zero road fatalities are possible. Designing for social trust is possible. Creating new types of partnerships across research and practice can break through silos and inertia, forging new relationships, possibilities, and practices. Our fellowship programs, which supported more than 50 projects and community changemakers, demonstrate the power of supporting the folks who are closest to the solutions on the ground and have the knowledge, capacity, and commitment to steward their projects as they evolve over time.

It has been another incredible year. Thank you to all the dedicated staff, board members, partners, collaborators, changemakers, community leaders, funders, and clients who helped us practice the art of the possible this 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.

## We Are 8 80 Cities!

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

## 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 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.

# Board of Directors



**Gil Penalosa**  
Founder and Chair



**Jerry Koh**  
Director



**Ana-Francisca de la Mora**  
Director



**David Roberts**  
Director



**Megan Meaney**  
Director



**Kay Matthews**  
Director



**Nyasha Harper-Michon**  
Director



**Judy Noordermeer**  
Treasurer



**Nadha Hassen**  
Director

## 8 80 Support

**Liyan Shahin**  
Intern

**Evelyn Lee**  
Intern

**Masoud Fazarmik**  
Student Intern

# Staff Team



**Amanda O'Rourke**  
Executive Director



**Jiya Benni**  
Director of Programs and  
Development



**Camila Uriona**  
Manager of Communications  
& Admin



**Verina Muharremi**  
Finance Manager



**Tennesha Joseph**  
Project Manager



**Praneti Kulkarni**  
Project Manager



**Katie Konstantopoulos**  
Project Manager



**Rebecca Arshawsky**  
Project Manager



**Raisa Hossain**  
Project Coordinator



**Jazmine Lawrence**  
Project Coordinator



**Johanna Tan**  
Comms & Marketing Intern



**Swati Dash**  
Community Engagement &  
Placemaking Facilitator

# Partners & Co-Creators

AARP Florida  
AARP Iowa  
AARP Nevada  
AARP NY  
ACAP Saint John  
Access Alliance Multicultural Health Services  
Behavioural Insights  
BGC South East Kingston  
Brock University  
BloxHUB  
Canadian Coalition for Global Road Safety  
Centre d'écologie urbaine  
Centre for Social Innovation  
City of Burlington  
City of Hamilton  
City of Helsinki  
City of Kingston  
City of Markham  
City of Mississauga  
City of Toronto  
City of Vancouver  
City of Yellowknife  
Climate Action Partnership  
Daily School Route  
Delivery Associates  
Earthscape Play  
EcoSuperior  
Envirocentre  
ERA  
Ever Active  
Evergreen  
Gil Penalosa  
Grandma Liz  
Green Action Centre  
Green Communities Canada  
GreenUP  
Halton Region Public Health  
Heart Comonos  
Helpful Places  
Helsinki City Museum  
Hossam Hewidy  
Indus Community Services  
Insitute of Circumpolar Health Research  
Jay Pitter Placemaking  
JAYU  
Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington Public Health  
Le Plateue Mont Royal, Ville de Montreal  
Lift360  
Muslims in Public Space  
MOBI-O  
Ophea  
Park People  
Peel District School Board  
Placemaking Canada  
Placemaking X  
plazaPOPS  
Queens University  
RaivioBumann  
Safe Streets Coalition  
Selina Young  
Society of Children and Youth BC

Student Transportation Services for Waterloo Region  
Sustainable Calgary  
Tabita Shurgold  
TAS  
Tommi Laitio  
Toronto Chinatown Land Trust  
Toronto Community Housing Corporation  
Toronto Metropolitan University  
Toronto Public Health  
Town of Caledon  
Unit 270 Gallery  
University of British Columbia  
Universite de Montreal  
University of Guelph  
University of Toronto  
University of Waterloo  
Urban Minds  
UrbanSpace  
Virve Hyysalo  
World Urban Parks  
Y Saatio  
York Region District School Board

# Funders & Clients

AARP Livable Communities  
Balsam Foundation  
Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
City of Toronto  
Green Communities Canada  
Knight Foundation  
Cities for Better Health/Novo Nordisk  
Public Health Agency of Canada  
Town of Caledon  
United Way of Greater Toronto  
University of Waterloo  
Brock University  
Queen's University  
Institute for Circumpolar Health Research

# 2025

# 2025 Communications Highlights



**65,673**  
Website sessions

**4**  
News  
Features

**7,490**  
Newsletter subscribers



**6,252**  
LinkedIn followers



**15**  
Blogposts



**5,385**  
Instagram followers



**12**  
Newsletter issues



**7,569**  
Facebook followers



**11,928**  
X followers



**78%**  
**NEW**  
Web Visitors

## Website Visitors by Country



31%



31%



# Tailored Programs

# Knight Emerging City Champions

Location: **Toronto, Ontario**

Funder: **Knight Foundation**

**Knight Emerging City Champions** is a fellowship and micro-grant program for young civic innovators in the U.S. with bold ideas to transform their communities by enhancing community connecting, fostering creative expression, and building local resilience. This year, the program marked its 10th anniversary, and we celebrated the milestone with the KECC 8th cohort in our KECC Toronto Studio. Together, we shared ideas, built relationships, and learned from an inspiring group of young city leaders already transforming and creating meaningful change in their communities.

**20**  
champions  
engaged

Over  
**200**  
applications



**KNIGHT**  
Emerging City  
Champions

Supported By



**3**  
day in-  
person  
studio



# Ontario Community Changemakers

Location: **Toronto, Ontario**

Funder: **Balsam Foundation**

Ontario Community Changemakers is 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. In its fifth year, the groundbreaking #OCChangemakers program brought together 30 changemakers from across Ontario for our OCC Toronto Studio. We had a packed agenda for the two days of the studio, including city tours, workshops, panel discussions and social sharing.



**30**  
changemakers  
engaged

**2**  
day in-  
person  
studio

Supported By

**BALSAM FOUNDATION**



**~450**  
applicants

Approx. 22% of applications from Rural & Remote Communities (up from 15%) and approx. 8% of applications from Northern Ontario (up from 5%).

Changemakers were selected from Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Kenora, Toronto, North Bay, Green River, Barrie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Hamilton, Ajax, Vaughan, Kitchener, Milton, London, Thames Centre, Utopia, Brampton, Markham, Haliburton, and Scarborough.



# Community Engagement & Public Space Activations

# Growing Healthy Places

**Location:** Mississauga, Ontario  
**Funder:** Novo Nordisk Canada Inc

In 2025, 8 80 Cities announced a new partnership with Ophea, Peel District School Board, Brock University, and Novo Nordisk Canada Inc. to support children's health and well-being in school communities across Mississauga. Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga is a 3-year, community-driven initiative that brings schools and local partners together to enhance access to physical and nutrition education, nutritious food, and safe spaces for play and movement for children ages 6-13. This project is the Canadian implementation of the global Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative (COPI) from Cities for Better Health. Stay tuned as we work alongside students, caregivers, educators, and community partners to implement a program package across 10 select Mississauga schools in 2026!



Supported By



**1,230+**  
**community members engaged**



**3,725**  
**votes cast using sticky dots**



**2**  
**community co-design workshops**

**21**  
**pop-up engagements in schools and neighbourhoods across Mississauga**



# 8 80 TowerPOPS

**Location:** Cooksville, Mississauga and Rockcliffe Smythe, Toronto

**Funder:** Public Health Agency of Canada and United Way Greater Toronto

Transforming Underused Spaces to Support Health Equity in Tower Neighbourhoods is a 3-year multi-disciplinary project led by 8 80 Cities. 8 80 TowerPOPS is a unique project that aims to activate underused spaces close to large clusters of high-density apartment towers to improve physical health outcomes for the community in Rockcliffe-Smythe and Cooksville neighbourhoods.

In 2025, we opened up 8 80 TowerPOPS Cooksville and Rockcliffe-Smythe to the public with design installation and programming, in collaboration with local neighbours and partner organizations.

As part of the transformation, we installed benches, Muskoka chairs, a stage, planters and a multi-purpose sport court in Cooksville. In Rockcliffe-Smythe, two harvest tables, four raised garden beds, and wooden chairs were added to the play area. Both sites have a shipping container that acts as a pop-up lending library that is stocked with fun play and exercise equipment for the community to use.

**65,000+**  
sq ft of underused public space transformed



**30+**  
community events held



**1,700+**  
community members engaged

## Supported By



# Caledon Public Arts & Culture

**Location:** Caledon, Ontario

**Funder:** Town of Caledon

The Town of Caledon, with the support of 8 80 Cities, is developing a Public Art Plan as a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Strategy. From August to October, we joined the Town in hosting pop-up engagements and focus groups to gather recommendations from community members, artists, and organizations. Our upcoming report will highlight our findings and provide recommendations for the Plan to deliver high-quality public art in shared public spaces, thereby enhancing community vitality and supporting ongoing revitalization efforts.

## Supported By



**513**  
votes cast using  
sticky dots



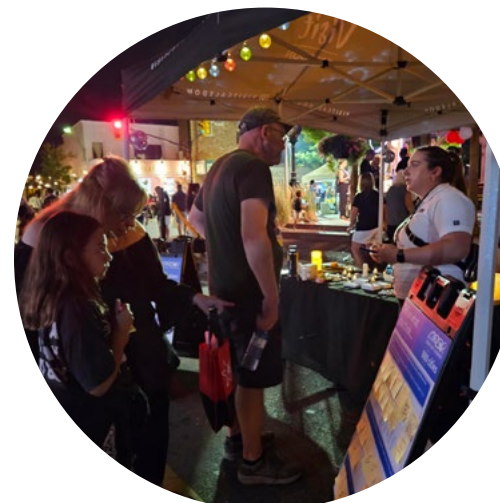
**266**  
ideas generated using  
sticky notes



**433**  
community  
members  
engaged

**11**  
submissions of  
public surveys

**4**  
pop-up  
engagements in  
neighbourhoods  
across Caledon



**16**  
artists engaged  
during Focus Group





# Workshops & Training

# 2025 Healthy Urban Policy Workshop

**Location:** Helsinki, Finland

**Funder:** Canadian Institutes of Health and Research

In May 2025, with funding from CIHR-IPPH, 8 80 Cities hosted a 5-day immersive workshop in Helsinki for teams from Burlington, Hamilton, Kingston and Yellowknife to learn about how this model city has designed, implemented and evaluated healthy urban policies such as housing and sustainable growth, healthy and active public spaces for all seasons, and planning the equitable city for all ages.



**19**  
participants

**20**  
speakers

**5**  
days of  
immersive  
learning

Supported By



# 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. 8 80 Cities is a technical lead on the project and co-facilitates a Community of Practice, and develops and delivers a Training Program with two other technical leads.



Supported By



**7**

**Community of Practice sessions facilitated**

**6**

**training modules developed and delivered**

# AARP Livable Communities Technical Assistance Programs - TAPS

**Location:** Various States, U.S.A.  
**Client:** AARP

In 2025, 8 80 Cities partnered with the state offices of California, New York, Florida, Nevada, Puerto Rico, Iowa, North Carolina and Wisconsin to host a series of virtual/in-person presentations & workshops, develop strategic engagement materials, and provide training on public space assessment tools to energize local advocates and identify quick wins for creating livable, age-friendly spaces in communities big and small.



Supported By





# Resources & Toolkits

# Placemaking in the Floodplains

**Funder:** University of Toronto

**Partner:** University of Toronto

How can we design public spaces that thrive in flood-prone areas? Our latest resource, by 80 Cities Sustainability Catalyst Intern Nushrat Jahan, explores innovative placemaking strategies that embrace nature, prioritize safety, and foster community connection in floodplain environments. Discover how cities can turn challenges into opportunities for vibrant, adaptable spaces.



# Cooksville Community Action Plan

**Partner:** United Way Cooksville, Indus Community Services

“The Cooksville Community Action Plan, is a proactive investment in community planning and local capacity building that aims to address and respond to key challenges and opportunities in this unique and ever evolving community’s built and social environments. The collective goal was to create a plan that would align with and directly respond and deliver on actions highlighted in locally developed neighbourhood-based frameworks, social charters, and ongoing community engagements and priority setting exercises.”

## Supported By

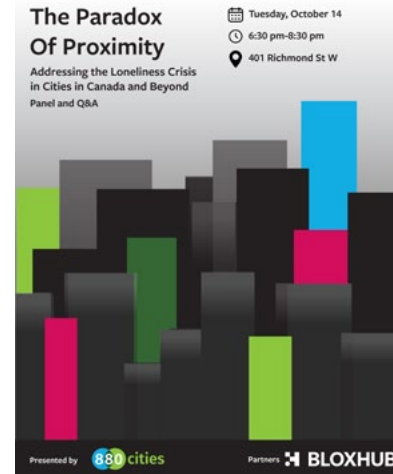




# Events & Conferences

# The Paradox of Proximity

The Paradox of Proximity – This Fall, 8 80 Cities and BLOXHUB, Denmark’s Nordic hub for sustainable urbanism, teamed up to explore a simple but timely question: Why do people in cities designed for proximity still feel so disconnected, and what can we do about it? Through a public panel and a City Builders Breakfast, we brought together leaders from government, community organizations, foundations, and industry to explore how cities like Toronto can design both spaces and social conditions that enable connection.



**~100**  
people engaged

# PlacemakingX TO

PlacemakingX TO – In June, we proudly supported the 2025 Global Placemaking Summit hosted by PlacemakingX in Toronto. Our team led sessions on streets as places, placemaking with the unhoused, and school streets. We also hosted a rooftop social at 401 Richmond, welcoming placemakers from over 30 countries to celebrate the power of public space.



# Cities for Everyone with Gil

Cities for Everyone with Gil: 100 Sessions. The Cities for Everyone with Gil webinar reached 100 global sessions, featuring inspiring presentations from leading urbanists on inclusive cities. Click here to enjoy a Holiday surprise gift from Gil to celebrate this milestone.

**100**  
sessions

**~350**  
people per  
session



# Knight Media Forum

8 80 Cities Comms Manager, Camila Uriona, attended the Knight Media Forum in Miami, where she met with partners, funders and Knight Emerging City Champions from various cohorts. It was an excellent opportunity to learn more about local journalism, digital transformation and civic action and participation in the U.S.

**3**  
day forum

**~1000**  
attendees

**4**  
former champions &  
funders engaged



# Keynote Session

8 80 Cities Executive Director, Amanda O'Rourke, gave the opening Keynote Session with the presentation What Is A Healthy City? to 200+ attendees from across Canada, researchers, policymakers, students, and community leaders, all committed to building healthier, more equitable cities.

# CUI Canada State of Cities Summit

We attended the CUI Canada State of Cities Summit in Ottawa and learned how Canadian communities are transforming neighbourhoods by leveraging local resources and creativity.

# Physical and Health Education Canada National Conference

8 80 Cities Project Manager, Tennesha Joseph, attended the 2025 PHE National Conference in Niagara Falls, ON, through our friends at Ophea to explore opportunities to support play and movement for children and youth, drawing from PHE teachers, physical activity leaders and sector experts across Canada to help inform our Growing Healthy Places co-design activities and materials.

# Looking ahead..

2025 was a year of practicing the power of possibility. We brought communities together, sparked ideas into action, and transformed public spaces with purpose into community hubs where everyone feels welcome, no matter their age or ability.

As we step into 2026, a special year marking 20 years of 8 80 Cities, we're not only celebrating how far we've come—we're looking ahead with renewed ambition. This milestone fuels our commitment to deepen our impact, expand our collaborations, and keep pushing for healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable cities for everyone.

To our clients, partners, board members, and volunteers: thank you. Your trust, energy, and collaboration have shaped two decades of change. Together, we're ready to write the next chapter—one that brings even more vibrant public spaces, stronger communities, and 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.

