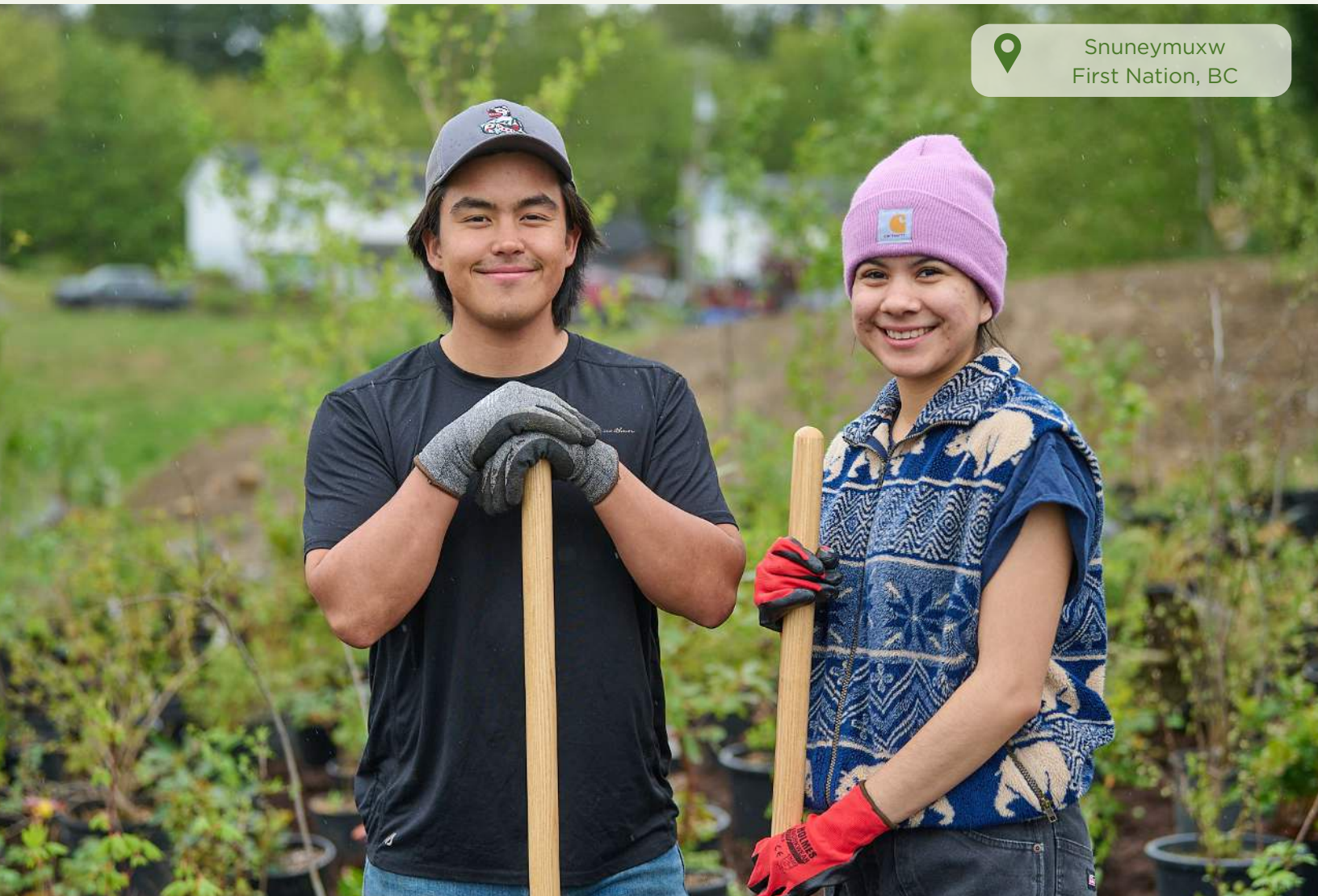




2024 Impact Report



Snuneymuxw
First Nation, BC



Letter from the Director

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the incredible strides we have made together through the Living Cities Canada Fund.

As a team we've nurtured this initiative from a pilot project, funding just over 20 projects annually in 2023, to a fully operational fund, supporting over 40 on-the ground projects this year! We're overjoyed to have been able to disburse over \$600,000 to frontline community organizations to enable their local leadership in creating new green infrastructure in their communities.

I am so proud of the strides we're taking as a collective to create equitable and sustainable solutions to the challenges of climate change and urbanization, and the work GCC is doing internally to reduce barriers to funding, and fill gaps in supporting organizations to conduct this work where it is needed most.

Over the past year, 31 different organizations worked with Green Communities Canada to implement local green infrastructure solutions, enhancing climate resilience. These efforts have brought communities closer to nature, reduced flood risks and ambient air temperatures, and fostered biodiversity in some of the most equity-deserving neighbourhoods across the country.

By far, the most inspiring aspect of this work is the people behind it. From grassroots environmental leaders to volunteers and community members, their dedication and creativity drive the success of the Living Cities Canada Fund and bring me hope for our collective future.

To our funders, supporters, partners, and the many many hands that bring this work to light, I say thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are transforming neighborhoods, empowering communities, and nurturing a greener future for all.



Emily Amon,
Director, Green Infrastructure

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "EMMON".

Executive Summary

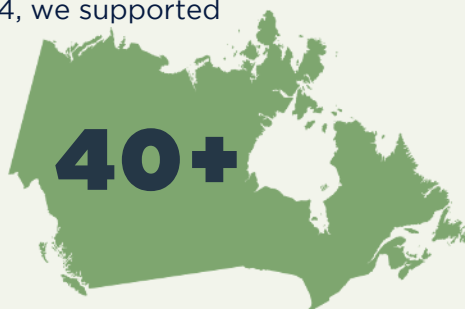
The **Living Cities Canada Fund** is a program of Green Communities Canada (GCC). The Fund provides local partner organizations (local and regional environmental non-profits, municipalities, conservation authorities, and First Nation governments) across the country with training, funding, and logistical support to engage their community, build public understanding, advance local policy, and implement equity-embedded urban green infrastructure projects where they are needed most.

At the heart of our work is an understanding of the intersections between environmental and social inequity - and a commitment to ensuring our projects are carried out with leadership from, and within, the communities most impacted by the climate crises.

The Living Cities Canada Fund has three streams that offer different levels of funding and structured processes to support organizations to implement green infrastructure in their communities.

2024 AT A GLANCE

In 2024, we supported



green infrastructure projects in 26 different cities across 8 provinces.

These projects transformed over

8,000 m²

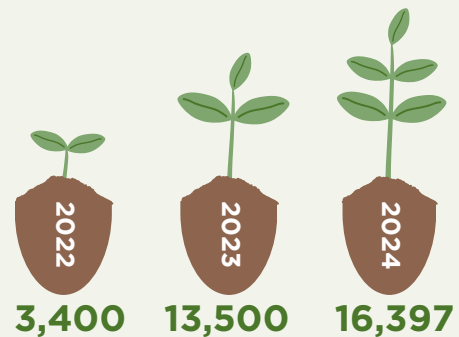
of urban lands into nature-positive greenspaces. That's equivalent to:

6

olympic swimming pools or...

19

basketball courts!



ANNUAL PLANTING STATS

This year we planted more than

16,000

plants, including

7,326

urban trees.

These projects engaged over

4,300

volunteers, including

2,492

youth volunteers.

2024 Living Cities Canada Fund Projects

Mini Forests/ Miyawaki Forest Plantings

Densely planted urban plots, designed to mimic a natural forest ecosystem.

ACAP Saint John | Saint John, NB
Bagida'waad Alliance | Bruce County, ON
City of Hamilton | Hamilton, ON
City of Richmond / Garden City Conservation Society | Richmond, BC
Credit Valley Conservation | Mississauga, ON
EnviroCentre | Ottawa, ON
Gorge Waterway Action Society | Victoria, BC
Grandmother's Voice | Oakville, ON
GreenUp | Peterborough, ON
Halton District School Board | Halton, ON
Little Forests Durham | Uxbridge, ON
Little Forests Kingston | Kingston, ON
London Environment Network | London, ON
Ontariogreen / Town of Lincoln | Lincoln, ON
Seedlings Forest Education | Victoria, BC
Snuneymuxw Hulit Lelum First Nation | Snuneymuxw First Nation, BC



Community/Food Gardens

Collaborative areas where participants contribute to the upkeep and benefits of the garden.

Black Environmental Initiative | Toronto, ON
GreenUP | Peterborough, ON
RainscapeTO | Toronto, ON

Tree Planting

Transplanting tree seedlings to restore or create forests

ACAP Saint John | Saint John, NB
Green Action Center | Winnipeg, MB
Hope Blooms | Halifax, NS
LEAF | Toronto, ON
REEP | Kitchener, ON

Rain Gardens

Collect and filter stormwater from hard surfaces like roofs, driveways, and sidewalks

Ecosuperior | Thunder Bay, ON
Green Venture | Hamilton, ON
Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance | Dieppe, NB

Other

Projects under this category include Pollinator or Naturalized Gardens, Green Roofs, Indigenous Medicine Gardens, Depaving Projects, and Green Infrastructure Maintenance Activities.

Calgary Climate Hub | Calgary, AB
EnviroCentre | Ottawa, ON
London Environment Network | London, ON
Toronto Botanical Garden | Toronto, ON
Saskatchewan Environmental Society | Saskatoon, SK

Project Spotlight

Bagida'waad Mini Forest Bagida'waad Alliance Bruce County, ON



100 m²

Site Size

304

Total Plants

224

Trees Planted

27

Total Volunteers

PROJECT SUMMARY

Bagida'waad Alliance led the creation of a mini forest on a shoreline property near Georgian Bay, which had previously been stripped of natural fill during the 1970s for roadwork. The site preparation involved spreading cobblestone soil, topsoil, compost, and mulch to rebuild the soil structure and raise the grade. Over 1,000 feet of rotting logs from the property were repurposed as perimeter supports and nurse logs to promote habitat for fungi and replicate forest floor ecology. The planting featured 300 native plants across 40 species, including Butternut, Bitternut Hickory, Black Cherry, and Tulip Trees, selected to match the local eco-district.

Community engagement was central to the project's success, with 27 volunteers participating, including Aki Guardian Youth, who contributed to site preparation, planting, and ongoing maintenance. Volunteers from the Beaver Valley, Blue Mountains, and Meaford areas joined the effort, while partnerships with Origin Native Plants and Hortico Nursery ensured plant availability despite challenges with local native species suppliers. The mini forest serves as both an ecological restoration and a community-building effort, emphasizing the connection between people and land. This project has inspired plans to expand mini forests along the Georgian Bay shoreline, creating wind barriers and replacing invasive species with native vegetation.



2024 Project Highlights



Glen Falls

Community Partner: ACAP Saint John

Project Location: Saint John, NB

Project Size: 100m²

Number of Plants: 438

Number of Volunteers: 32

PROJECT SUMMARY

ACAP Saint John revitalized an urbanized area in Glen Falls, Saint John with the planting of a 100m² mini forest. The selected site, formerly a saltmarsh and situated on the floodplain, has struggled with flooding due to the scarcity of green spaces and mature forests nearby. Collaborating with a local high school, ACAP Saint John enlisted student volunteers, who were organized into two groups, each planting 50m² of the mini forest and half of the plant stock (~200 plants). Following the planting, mulch was added to prevent weed growth and the space was fenced in to prevent deer and pedestrian traffic. This site is in a high traffic area, making it an excellent demonstration site and will help increase climate resilience in the Glen Falls area.

Toronto Community Housing

Community Partner: LEAF

Project Location: Toronto, ON

Project Size: 565 m²

Number of Plants: 374

Number of Volunteers: 290



PROJECT SUMMARY

LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) launched a tree-planting initiative across properties managed by Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) to help restore the urban canopy that has been diminished by the emerald ash borer and severe weather conditions. The planting included 36 trees and 338 shrubs distributed across 26 properties. A Tree Care Team will be formed at each TCHC location, consisting of both tenants and staff. These teams will receive stewardship tools and training from LEAF staff in the spring of 2025. Following this, they will engage in regular maintenance, including watering and weeding in 2025 and 2026.

Project Spotlight

SFN Transitional Housing

Snuneymuxw Hulit Lelum First Nation
Nanaimo, BC

200m²

Site Size

1036

Total Plants

242

Trees Planted

40

Total Volunteers



PROJECT SUMMARY

Snuneymuxw First Nation (SFN) collaborated with the Rotary Club of Nanaimo to create a mini forest at a transitional housing site. The site, which can house up to 15 individuals in studio apartments at one time, lacked landscaping funds, making the mini forest a perfect fit. Over 1,000 native plants, including culturally significant and edible species such as strawberry and snowberry, were planted following soil excavation and enrichment.

Approximately 40 volunteers participated, including SFN community members, Rotary Club seniors, and equity-deserving groups. The project provided an opportunity for those new to gardening to gain confidence, while engaging individuals who often experience anxiety in larger groups. The planting event garnered widespread community support, with positive feedback and high engagement on social media.

The mini forest fosters biodiversity, offers cultural and educational opportunities, and helps return the land to its natural state. Future plans include adding raised beds and educational components, with maintenance managed collaboratively by residents and SFN staff. This initiative highlights the importance of community-led green infrastructure, inspiring conversations about replicating similar projects in other communities.



2024 Project Highlights



Valleybrook Park

Community Partner: Grandmother's Voice

Project Location: Oakville, ON

Project Size: 100 m²

Number of Plants: 310

Number of Volunteers: 100

PROJECT SUMMARY

Grandmother's Voice led the creation of a new mini forest at Valleybrook Park in Oakville, Ontario, transforming an area previously overgrown with buckthorn and other weeds. During the site preparation phase, temporary signage about the upcoming project was installed in the park and many neighbours were engaged in conversations and invited to participate. A series of planting days engaged community members, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbors, seniors, visually impaired volunteers, and families. Activities included an opening smudging ceremony, community planting, and education on ecological benefits. Native trees and shrubs were selected for three planting zones based on soil conditions, with guidance from Indigenous Elders and sourced from Kayanase Greenhouse, Six Nations.

Humber River Lodge

Community Partner: RainscapeTO

Project Location: Toronto, ON

Project Size: 30 m²

Number of Plants: 123

Number of Volunteers: 148



PROJECT SUMMARY

Humber River Lodge, known as the Memtigwaake Kinomaage Maawnjiding supports the urban Indigenous community in reclaiming land for cultural practices. This project led by RainscapeTO engaged 148 volunteers and community members, who planted native flora for food, medicine, and ecological restoration after clearing invasives. The event included cultural ceremonies and concluded with a community dinner. Long-term site care is managed by local volunteers and the Memtigwaake Kinomaage Maawnjiding Advisory Circle, ensuring sustainability through native species suited to the area. Future plans involve expanding land reclamation and enhancing partnerships for similar projects.

Project Spotlight

Hope Blooms HQ

Hope Blooms

Halifax, NS



100m²

Site Size

72

Total Plants

34

Trees Planted

115

Total Volunteers

PROJECT SUMMARY

Hope Blooms, an organization rooted in Halifax's African Nova Scotian and immigrant communities, transformed a neglected plot into a flourishing green space. In celebration of National Tree Day on September 25, Hope Blooms collaborated with Tree Canada to host a tree-planting event. More than 80 volunteers, including 35 youth from Hope Blooms' Green Labs program and families from the local BIPOC community, joined forces with partners such as BMO, Starbucks, and employees from Definity Insurance Foundation. The event was vibrant, featuring music, food, and a retrospective viewing of Hope Blooms' appearance on Dragon's Den, which played a pivotal role in launching their greenhouse program. Youth engaged in planting and learned about tree identification. This initiative adds to Hope Blooms' existing 10,000 square feet of gardens and social enterprise projects, which provide scholarships and community support.

The tree-planting site is integral to Hope Blooms' broader mission of creating inclusive and accessible green spaces while promoting environmental education. Maintenance is sustained through weekly programs such as Green Labs and Youth Urban Agriculture. Future plans include expanding tree-planting initiatives to other parks and developing a solar-powered music studio with hydroponic walls.



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS IN 2024

PARTNERS



FUNDERS



About Green Communities Canada

GCC has been leading a community-based climate action movement for more than 25 years, working together with our members and partners from across the country to advance transformative, equitable, and lasting change. As a national organization, our goal is to support and sustain grassroots action. We do this by acting as a network, funder, backbone, and accelerator. We have a solid track record of leading community-engaged green infrastructure programming through our Depave Paradise Initiative, National Mini Forest Program, and Living Cities Canada Fund.



Strategic Overview



2023-2024 Living Cities Canada Fund Design

The Living Cities Canada Fund offered three different funding streams from 2023-2024 that allowed organizations to grow their community's capacity for action in a way that is strategic, inclusive, and transformative.

Up to \$30,000 | 8 - 12 months

Plan & Engage

Communities develop local Living Cities policy pathways using our evidence-based framework; build awareness and support by localizing tested campaign tools; and cultivate alliances with diverse partners.



MOBILIZE

Up to \$15,000 | 6-12 months

DEMONSTRATE

Small Capital



Communities complete small single-site GI projects* that increase local participation and engagement, build local capacity and confidence, and demonstrate impact. Proven models, such as depaving, and mini forests inform design.

Up to \$60,000 | 18 - 24 months

TRANSFORM

Large / Multi-Site Capital



Communities implement innovative large, neighbourhood-scale, or other multi-site GI projects*. Projects are guided by Living Cities (or similar) policy pathways and will advance community-identified priorities.

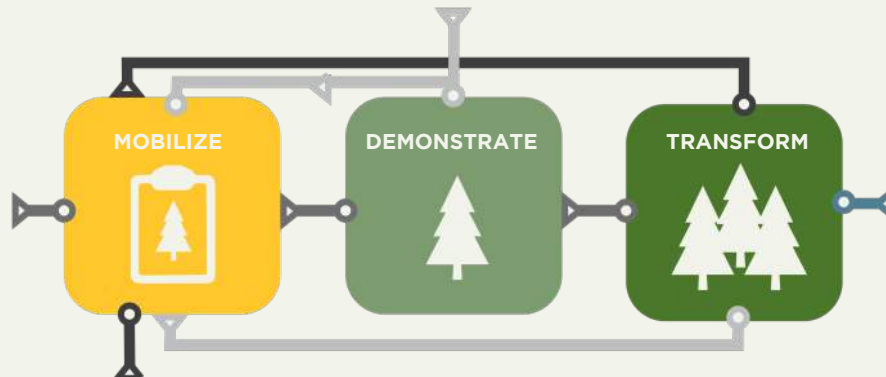
*GI projects supported through the Fund are all focused on nature-based solutions. Small projects could include rain gardens, Depaves, mini forests, pollinator pathways, green alleys, pocket parks, or bioswales. Large projects could include significant single-site interventions or multi-site GI (e.g. rain gardens in a flood-vulnerable neighbourhood). Projects on buildings (green roofs/walls) could be included.

New Cities

These communities have not undertaken any GI projects and are in the early stages of building partnerships to support implementation. They are interested in building momentum.

Emerging Cities

These communities demonstrate engagement from key partners who are committed to the strategic advancement of GI.



Advanced Cities

These communities have community-informed strategies in place and have the capacity and support to launch high impact initiatives.

Experienced Cities

These communities have completed successful demonstration projects, and have strong and diverse partnerships. Municipalities are invested in GI and there is readiness to accelerate implementation.

2025 Living Cities Canada Fund Outlook

Beginning in 2025, the Living Cities Canada Fund will now offer four different funding streams: these opportunities are grouped into projects focused on Policy and Planning, and those which centre On the Ground Action in their approach. These streams allow organizations to grow their communities' readiness for action based on their current level of capacity and experience.

With multiple points of entry, local organizations have the opportunity to access the targeted supports they need to build strong and diverse alliances that move green infrastructure into the mainstream. This approach also enables Green Communities Canada and our funding partners to strategically focus our granting and partner selection criteria to achieve broad representation and deep impact.

2025 Granting Pathways



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Our national Green Infrastructure Community of Practice brings together leading ENGO and Municipal partner organizations to share best practices, advance collective projects, and support evaluation and evolution of local approaches to advancing green infrastructure that is equitable, abundant, and thriving.

INCLUDES

- Monthly Meetings
- Mentorship Networks
- Webinars
- Free Training Resources
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Collaborative Funding Opportunities

CORE PRINCIPLES

Living Cities Canada Fund Vision

Our 10-year vision is that 'Living Cities' flourish from coast to coast to coast. We will reverse the decline in green urban space by establishing a robust, strategic, and scalable framework that supports communities to replace grey urban infrastructure with nature-based solutions and prioritize green infrastructure (GI) in new developments. The Living Cities Canada Fund measurably accelerates the growth of nature-rich cities, increasing community resilience, health, and vitality.

Living Cities Canada Fund Approach

The Living Cities Canada Fund provides communities with direct financial support and a structured process to build capacity, leadership, and momentum for GI. Our approach is evidence-based and cultivates diverse participation in the planning and ongoing implementation of community-led solutions.

Living Cities Canada Fund Tactics

Key tactics of the Living Cities Canada Fund:

Develop local policy foundations and pathways

To move GI projects beyond the 'pilot phase' and into mainstream planning processes.

Cultivate strong municipal-community working relationships

To emphasize community-engaged GI development, ensuring long-term investments are made where they are most needed.

Mobilize community participation and leadership

To empower and equip citizens to take meaningful action towards climate resilience and justice.

Support knowledge transfer within and between communities

To strengthen local capacity and provide accelerated learning opportunities within communities and across our network.

Abundant

Green infrastructure becomes the default in land-use planning & transforms urban design

Thriving

Green infrastructure is installed & maintained to provide the full range of long-term benefits

Equitable

Green infrastructure is prioritized in the locations with the greatest environmental & social need

This 'tri-principle' approach is an essential part of our strategy to grow vibrant and resilient nature-rich cities that address the dual challenges of climate change and public health inequities.