HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2023 LIVABLE CITIES FORUM
FROM INTENTION TO IMPLEMENTATION
SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2023
MISSISSAUGA, ON
About the Livable Cities Forum

Advancing local resilience while transitioning to a net-zero future is increasingly mainstream as communities realize the impacts of a changing climate on people, assets, and the natural environment. At the same time, communities are finding that they cannot work in isolation to advance this important work – dialogue, exchange, and cooperation with key partners from various sectors is crucial.

The Livable Cities Forum (LCF) is Canada’s preeminent event for municipal leaders and practitioners who want to create livable cities. The Forum fosters interactive peer learning to explore how to build communities that are prepared for current and future impacts of climate change while moving toward a more sustainable, healthy, and equitable future. It provides a space for delegates to learn from colleagues and experts, share their knowledge and experiences, and participate in workshops and panels showcasing local innovation related to climate action and resilience.

LCF has been exploring how to take action at the local level to make our communities more livable since 2011. The core themes of energy transition, climate adaptation, and meaningful and inclusive engagement are interwoven throughout program sessions from year to year. Each LCF explores additional themes to support local climate action based on emerging trends and lessons we are continuously learning through our work with communities across Canada.

LCF is widely known for its high-calibre practical sessions, diverse speakers, and meaningful networking opportunities. Delegates walk away with tools and insights to address implementation challenges they are currently facing in their communities while making the most of opportunities.

“LCF is a fantastic forum for gaining insight on leading edge practice amongst local governments on sustainability and climate action. You’ll meet and learn from local government leaders, as well as folks representing innovative non-profit and consulting agencies who can support you on your climate action journey. Highly recommended!”

— Past LCF Delegate
LCF 2023

LCF 2023 was a great success and a reminder of the importance of collaboration, prioritizing relationships, and the power of candid conversations. The event convened local leaders, urban professionals, and on-the-ground practitioners from across Canada to explore how to build net-zero, resilient, equitable, and livable communities through the lens of “Intention to Implementation”.

It was probably one of the best conferences I have attended - excellent job!
— 2023 LCF Delegate

LCF 2023 took place September 25 to 27, 2023 at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga, on the traditional territory and treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and traditional homeland of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee First Nations. The 2023 program themes were designed to help communities:

- Increase the pace and scale of implementation of energy transition and climate resilience initiatives at the local level
- Explore financing solutions and the business case for climate action
- Reimagine how to approach climate action to increase engagement, motivation, and implementation

This report provides an overview of these themes and other highlights from LCF 2023.

This conference was a super-charger for my work and will continue to pay returns with the connections I’ve made.
— 2023 LCF Delegate

306 delegates attended
For 70%, this was their first LCF
100% would like to attend again

8 provinces represented
Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia

80 governments and agencies represented

76 NGOs and private companies represented

9 academic institutions represented

41 sessions offered
23 concurrent sessions
9 study tours
4 poster sessions
3 plenaries
2 side events

10 networking breaks and events included in the program

Photography by Ramón Vasconcelos and Sam Gamper.
Placemaking From the Ground-Up Side Event

Community-led placemaking projects foster connection and can help us build a deeper understanding of our interconnectivity to place, the land, and the larger community. Over the last three years, an unprecedented number of placemaking projects — including those funded by the Healthy Communities Initiative — were activated in municipalities across Canada, and in many communities disproportionately affected by the Pandemic.

Placemaking From the Ground-Up was a special side event of LCF 2023 hosted by the Canadian Urban Institute’s Healthy Communities Initiative team. It provided an opportunity to share, discuss, and build upon the takeaways and learnings around the role of placemaking and the interwoven relationships between place, community, and wellbeing.

Participants had the opportunity to meet with local community leaders and discuss how to build cities from the bottom up. Community-builders, pacemakers, and LCF delegates exchanged stories, shared highs and lows, and discussed ongoing questions that surround what it means to centre projects on communities and placemaking.

Side events at LCF are an excellent way to focus on certain aspects of our theme and programming, as well as incorporate voices that are less frequently given the platform to share about their work in local communities. Placemaking From the Ground-Up was a great setting to further foster relationships, exchange stories, and engage in meaningful ways. Participants walked away with a sense of togetherness and hope. Visit placemakingcommunity.ca to learn about the Healthy Communities Initiative Community of Practice.
Increasing the Pace and Scale of Local Climate Action

This theme examined how to increase the pace and scale of energy transition and climate resilience initiatives at the local level. Delegates explored how this can be achieved through partnerships and collaboration, multi-solving actions, and meaningful engagement throughout the Forum.

Financing Solutions

As we know, the costs of taking climate action can represent a barrier to implementation. This theme explored financing solutions versus the costs of inaction with various perspectives in mind. Sessions were designed to help delegates better understand the business case for climate action while connecting with financial experts from both the private and public sectors.

Approaching Climate Change Differently

In most communities, the lack of effective climate action is not due to a lack of information, planning, or policy solutions. So what is missing? This theme explored unconventional approaches to climate action and how these can help reimagine engagement, motivation, and implementation.
The sessions, discussions, and ideas shared generated non-stop margin notes in my notebook to incorporate into my strategies as I build an adaptation program in my city and prioritize my work in the coming year(s).

— 2023 LCF Delegate

Traditional Hoop Dance Performance

The stories we tell and the way we tell them have the power to build capacity and drive incentive in both cultivating resilience and acting on it. Lisa Odjig, two-time World Champion Hoop dancer, talked about how stories are passed down through the traditional hoop dance. She performed a dance for delegates.

Indigenous Perspectives and Voices

Truth and Reconciliation is a fundamental component to achieving net-zero resilient communities that we are committed to working towards. At ICLEI Canada, we endeavour to listen to and learn from Indigenous Peoples in the process of our work and, as part of this commitment, we made it a priority to ensure that Indigenous perspectives and voices were included in every plenary of LCF 2023 and throughout the Forum. Delegates from across Canada heard and learned from Kim Wheatley, Ojibwe Anishinaabe Grandmother from Shawanaga First Nation Reserve, Carolyn King, Former Elected Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Dr. Meagan Kakwirayentha Hamilton, Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto's Centre for Indigenous Studies, Hetxw’m Gyetxw (Brett Huson), Author, Knowledge Keeper & Artist, Lisa Odjig, Traditional Hoop Dancer, and Tee Duke, Director of Indigenous Initiative at the University of Toronto Mississauga.
Spotlight on Mississauga

Climate action in Mississauga was showcased throughout the Forum during various interactive sessions and on-the-ground study tours. Discussions with Mississauga experts were invigorating, ranging from conversations surrounding municipal carbon budgeting, to integrating health equity and diversity into climate action, and utilizing bold leadership to scale up implementation towards net zero. Meanwhile, local study tours provided delegates an opportunity to head out of the conference center and explore real world examples of energy transition and community climate action in Mississauga and neighbouring regions.

The City of Mississauga’s *We are Resilient* exhibition was also set up outside of the Living Arts Centre to showcase innovative methods to passively yet effectively engage the public in personal, local climate action. Delegates explored the exhibit between sessions. Visit the *We Are Resilient* web page to learn more.

Supporting Local Artists & Artisans

LCF 2023 featured a number of local artists who performed their many talents throughout the Forum. Motown band The Intentions gave a spectacular performance during the Monday evening reception which set the tone for a fun, lively few days. During the second day of the Forum, delegates enjoyed renditions of popular songs performed by violinist Isaac Eng during breakfast and lunch. Tuesday's Happy Hour featured traditional hoop dancer Lisa Odjig. Delegates had the opportunity to watch a mesmerizing performance by the two-time World Champion and some even tried out hoop dancing themselves. Tuesday's Happy Hour ended with a magnificent performance by Indigenous South American group Inka’s Band who provided the perfect energy and music for networking. Delegates also had the opportunity to interact with local art displays by Sawmill Sid and Mississauga Public Art.

Sawmill Sid

Sawmill Sid is an Indigenous family owned business that recovers and repurposes wood from diseased trees and trees that are fallen for development. Wood that would normally be sent to the landfill is turned into products like beams, flooring, gifts, and furniture while byproducts are used for fuel. Sawmill Sid's artworks were displayed during the Monday evening food celebration to showcase Sid's mission to capture and store carbon, promote public awareness of urban wood resources, and salvage valuable wood while honoring the environment.
**Actionable Insights**

LCF 2023 provided a space to discover and exchange innovative ideas and actionable insights to support local climate action. Sessions showcased practical tools, resources, leading edge practices, learnings from real world examples, and diverse perspectives.

**Relevant Topics**

Concurrent sessions simultaneously explored the themes of social resilience, built and natural infrastructure, and net-zero communities through the lens of equity, inclusion, and diversity throughout the three day event.

**Interactive Format**

LCF 2023 sessions were uniquely designed to go beyond presentation-style delivery. These included many interactive and engaging workshops, trainings, and discussions to offer hands-on learning opportunities over three days. Local study tours also allowed delegates to head out of the conference center and explore examples of energy transition and community climate action in Mississauga and neighbouring regions.

LCF was a lot of fun! The sessions covered a broad range of topics in the municipal climate action sphere and allowed many opportunities to connect with delegates. I am leaving the event feeling invigorated and inspired in my own climate action work.

— 2023 LCF Delegate

**Full Program & Presentations**

Speaker presentations are available on the LCF website. Keep in mind that sessions were designed to go beyond presentation-style delivery and included a variety of interactive elements and, as a result, some sessions have few or no presentations. Visit the LCF website to access the full program and presentations.

Download Presentations
A Bilingual Event

In order to make the Forum more accessible to delegates in both official languages, Wordly (an AI translation software) was used to offer simultaneous translation in more sessions than ever before. Online simultaneous French and English translations were available to delegates throughout the conference, allowing them to follow along with speakers in their preferred language using instantly translated text or audio.

Real World Examples

Study tours offered the opportunity for delegates to head out of the conference centre and see examples of climate action underway while discovering the City of Mississauga and region. A variety of session topics and transportation modalities — including walking, e-biking, and bus — were featured.

“Fantastic experience. I will encourage colleagues to attend next year.

— 2023 LCF Delegate

Meaningful Networking

LCF 2023 delegates learned from and collaborated with climate experts, leaders, policymakers, urban professionals, and on-the-ground practitioners. Opportunities for networking were purposefully included in the program to allow delegates to share experiences and lessons learned, have candid conversations, make connections, create and strengthen relationships, and build support networks.

9/10
overall event rating

100%
would like to attend the next Forum

80%
had great discussions and knowledge exchanges

75%
found the interactive session format valuable

70%
found the plenaries inspiring and insightful

70%
found the concurrent sessions actionable

65%
valued learning through real-world examples
Discussing Climate Budgeting and the TCFD

Climate budgeting and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) are new and emerging trends in the municipal climate space. Climate leaders are making commitments to them, practitioners are debating their merits, and specialists are creating and testing new methods to implement them. But what exactly are they and can these tools really help advance our climate goals? In Up for Discussion: Climate Budgeting and TCFD, we define both tools, provide our perspective on these new and emerging trends, and share questions we are asking as we advance with this work.

As part of LCF 2023, experts and municipal representatives that have used climate budgeting and the TCFD as part of their annual reporting discussed these concepts and questions during an interactive workshop. The outcomes of this workshop are presented in What We Heard: Municipal Climate Budgeting and Disclosure Workshop Summary as we continue to explore and discuss these ideas within the municipal climate space.

Download the workshop summary to learn more and join in this ongoing discussion.
Partners

As the host city of LCF 2023, the City of Mississauga showcased climate and sustainability initiatives in action throughout the Forum. Mississauga elected officials, staff, and experts shared their knowledge and experiences with other delegates — from conversations surrounding municipal carbon budgeting, to integrating health equity and diversity into climate action, and utilizing bold leadership to scale up implementation towards a net-zero and resilient future. The City also planned and delivered many memorable LCF 2023 program features including the study tours, local food celebration, and several performances by local artists.

As an ongoing host, ICLEI Canada plays a pivotal role in the planning and delivery of the LCF each year. Through our extensive network and connections, we bring together experts, speakers, practitioners, and professionals from across Canada to inspire and enable local climate action at scale. We create a space for delegates to connect with one another, build and strengthen relationships, learn from colleagues and experts, share their knowledge and experiences, and participate in workshops and panels showcasing local innovation related to climate action and resilience.

As a partner of LCF 2023, the Canadian Urban Institute contributed valuable sessions and speakers to the program including Placemaking From the Ground-Up — a special Healthy Communities Initiative side event that brought many community-builders and placemakers to LCF to share about their work.

Platinum Sponsor

As the platinum sponsors of LCF 2023, Co-operators were an indispensable contributor to this year’s Forum and brought their expertise regarding financing mitigation and adaptation initiatives to several sessions and plenaries.
Sponsors

The LCF 2023 study tours were made possible thanks to Tourism Mississauga with additional support from Neuron Mobility who provided the e-bikes for the Sustainable Transportation x Tactical Urbanism e-bike study tour.

The plenary stage had a living, lively, and green backdrop thanks to the 120+ trees provided by One Million Trees Mississauga and subsequently planted on behalf of LCF 2023 delegates. These trees will contribute to the City of Mississauga’s One Million Tree program goal of planting one million trees by 2032 in addition to the 500,000+ trees that have already been planted since 2013.

LCF 2023 was a bilingual event thanks to the Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes, who provided funding to support contributions from French-speaking participants, and to Heritage Canada, who provided funding towards translations. We received contributions from seven French speakers, French project posters, and welcomed several delegates from the province of Quebec. We were also able to offer simultaneous translation during all three plenaries and in numerous sessions throughout the Forum.

Join us at the next LCF

We look forward to the next Forum and hope you can join us! Sign up for ICLEI Canada’s email list to receive the latest LCF updates and learn about other upcoming events and opportunities. You can also contact us to get involved as a sponsor, partner, or host.