

# Depave Paradise

## Climate Communications Case Story



Accessibility



Positive Framing



Visual Storytelling



Social Norms and Prompts

### PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

**Project Title:** Depave Paradise

**Location:** Various Municipalities across Canada

**Project Partners:** Green Communities Canada, local municipalities, schools, environmental and community groups

**Date:** Launched in 2012

**Climate Issue:** Urban heat islands, stormwater runoff, and biodiversity loss

**Action Area:** Transforming hard surfaces into green spaces to improve urban resilience

**Behavioural Theme(s):** Accessibility, Positive Framing, Visual Storytelling, Social Norms and Prompts

**Audience:** Local residents, community organizations, schools, municipalities

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*Depaving is a great way to revitalize a space! It transforms a once-grey area into a beautiful spot for humans and pollinators to enjoy. It is also a great way to show how spaces can be reimagined and used to absorb rainwater and provide habitat.*

— Jenn McCallum, Green Communities Canada<sup>10</sup>

## IMPACT STORY

Depave Paradise, an initiative spearheaded by Green Communities Canada, seeks to mitigate the adverse effects of urbanization by removing asphalt in order to restore natural landscapes from impermeable surfaces (in parking lots, sidewalks, and driveways) into vibrant green spaces. Since its inception in 2012, the project has transformed numerous sites across Canada, enhancing urban biodiversity, reducing stormwater runoff, and combating the urban heat island effect.

The initiative harnesses the power of community engagement, mobilizing volunteers to participate in the depaving process. This hands-on approach not only fosters a sense of ownership among participants but also raises awareness about the environmental benefits of green spaces.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES INCLUDE...

- Encouraging communities to get involved in reclaiming and revitalizing unused urban spaces by removing asphalt and replacing it with living green surfaces;
- Educating community members about restoring natural water cycles, reducing flood risks, and mitigating heat islands in urban areas by being involved in restoration efforts;
- Building capacity to identify and care for native plant species while returning biodiversity to project sites; and
- Enhancing community engagement and environmental awareness through hands-on involvement and visual demonstrations of success.

## COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- **Workshops and Events:** Hands-on depaving events where community members remove asphalt and plant greenery foster direct engagement and deeper environmental awareness. In addition, engaging students turns these activities into inspiring learning opportunities.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Before-and-after photos, success stories, and project updates are used to spark interest and expand community participation in depaving efforts.
- **Educational Campaigns & Resources:** Easy access to resources and partner organizations ensures ongoing engagement.
- **Short Video Series:** Short videos that showcase the project, diverse locations, and participant stories inspire others.



## BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES & TAKEAWAYS

- **Accessibility:** Signage, shirts and other visual materials are posted while the Depaving activities take place. This helps to educate passersby about the project, encouraging people to investigate the project and even participate in future stewardship activities.
- **Visual Storytelling:** Showcasing the transformation of spaces through compelling visuals both digitally and in-person highlights the environmental and social benefits of depaving, so that the impact is clearly visible and inspires community support.
- **Social Norms and Prompts:** Showcasing successful case studies and the benefits of green spaces helps establish depaving as a socially accepted practice, encouraging broader community adoption.
- **Positive Framing:** Emphasizing the positive outcomes of removing asphalt, such as cooling urban areas, creating habitats, and enhancing community spaces, frames the initiative as a win-win solution, increasing its appeal and motivating action.

## CONCLUSION

Depave Paradise exemplifies the transformative power of community-driven environmental initiatives. Converting hard, impermeable surfaces into lush green spaces enhances urban biodiversity and resilience and fosters a strong sense of community engagement and environmental stewardship. This initiative and its various communications efforts serve as a model for other cities looking to address the challenges of urbanization and climate change through highly visible grassroots action and community awareness.

## SOURCES

Amon, E. (2022, March 8). Depave Paradise forum to discuss green infrastructure, community engagement, native plant selection & more. Green Communities Canada. <https://greencommunitiescanada.org/depave-paradise-forum/>

Green Communities Canada. (n.d.). *Depave Paradise*. <https://depaveparadise.ca/>

## MORE CASE STORIES AND RESOURCES ONLINE

This case story was developed by ICLEI Canada through the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation (ORCCA) as part of a Climate Communications Toolkit. Find more case stories and additional climate communications resources online at [icleicanada.org/project/climate-communications-toolkit](https://icleicanada.org/project/climate-communications-toolkit)

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## CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

