



# Liveable Community Project

Simcoe County

*8-80 Cities  
Creating a More Liveable and Sustainable Simcoe County.*





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### Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport

The Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport was created in 2005 with a mandate to support and deliver programs promoting healthy lifestyles and healthy choices in the province of Ontario. The Ministry recognizes that health is determined by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behaviour.

The Ministry focuses on a number of key priority areas including active living, healthy eating, injury prevention, Ontario's smoke-free strategy, and mental health. As part of its work the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport has established the Healthy Community Fund (HCF), designed to assist and support the projects and organizations that are dedicated to helping Ontarians lead a healthy and active lifestyle.

The HCF plays a key role in helping the Ministry achieve its vision of "Healthy communities working together and Ontarians leading healthy and active lives." The Fund consists of three streams, one of which is the HCF Grants Project Stream. The grants stream provides funding opportunities for eligible organizations to address two or more of the following health promotion priorities:

- Physical activity, sport and recreation;
- Healthy eating;
- Tobacco use/exposure;
- Substance and alcohol misuse;
- Injury prevention; and
- Mental health

For more information about HCF, please visit the Ministry's website at:

<http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/healthy-communities/hcf/default.asp>



### Springwater

Springwater is a municipality of approximately 18,000 residents located in the heart of Simcoe County. Springwater Township is home to the second largest concentration of County Forests and is a popular destination for outdoor activities in all four seasons.

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8-80 Cities is a Canadian-based non-profit organization with an international outlook. Our goal is to contribute to the creation of vibrant cities and healthy communities, where residents live happier and enjoy great public places.

We promote walking and bicycling as activities and urban parks, trails and other public spaces as great places for ALL.

These activities and public spaces improve our environment, advance economic development, boost and complement our transportation systems, make better recreation for all, and enhance our personal and public health.

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# Forward by Gil Peñalosa

It has never been more obvious that the North American urban norm characterized by design and development dictated by the personal automobile must change. Obesity rates have never been higher, our population never older, our environment never more tested, resources never so strained and in recent memory, the economy never so delicate.

How we build and live in our cities affects all of these mounting challenges. We need to create cities that encourage physical activity, reduce our reliance of fossil fuels, provide mobility options for people young and old, and support our recovering economy in a sustainable and responsible way.

Cities across the province are growing at an incredible rate. In the Greater Toronto Area alone, the population is expected to grow by almost 50% by 2036. The urgency to change our normal development practices and shift to a focus on people-oriented design cannot be overstated. With newly elected officials across the province, we need to take advantage of fresh ideas. Our cities need to change and they need to change fast.

We are confident that with the support of dedicated local champions; gutsy politicians who uphold the general interest; and innovative members of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, we can begin to develop healthy and sustainable people-oriented communities.

At 8-80 Cities we hope that through our community engagement projects, such as the one this report is based on, we can help contribute to this change.

I invite you to read this report, and I hope that it will help inspire you to push for the change we need to develop our cities in a new and more sustainable way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gil Peñalosa', is written over a light blue background.

Gil Peñalosa  
Executive Director 8-80 Cities

# Executive Summary

Located just an hour north of Toronto, it's no surprise that Simcoe County is a popular tourist destination. Boasting the longest fresh-water beach in the world, picturesque ski hills and recreational trails, and beautiful scenery made famous by the Group of Seven, Simcoe County has much to offer local residents and tourists alike.

Made up of 16 municipalities, Simcoe County is a largely rural county, with the exception of urban centres such as Barrie and Orillia. The county is anticipating rapid growth, with the population pegged to grow by 51% over the next 25 years.<sup>1</sup>

Like most communities in Ontario, transportation is dominated by single-occupancy vehicles with 81% of people driving to work. The county has below average rates of walking and cycling to work, and public transit usage is extremely low at approximately 2%.

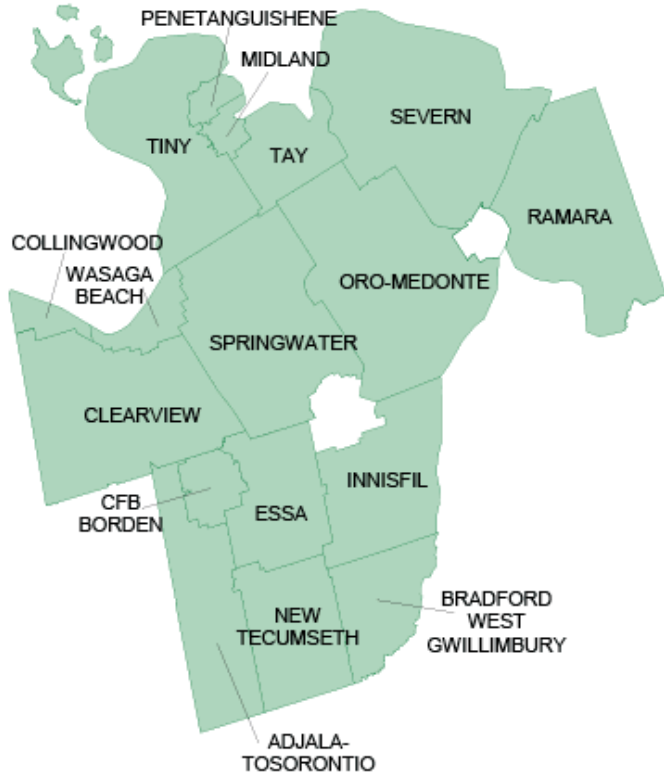
With rapid growth expected, Simcoe County faces an important opportunity to adopt progressive urban planning principles that focus on people-oriented community development and active transportation. By focusing on improving walkability and bikeability, Simcoe County can work towards improving the health, vibrancy, and sustainability of its 16 unique municipalities.

On March 14th, the 8-80 Cities team was invited to Simcoe County to facilitate a workshop and public meeting at the Springwater Township Administration Centre in the Council Chamber. The goal of the sessions was to help municipal staff, community members, and elected officials better understand the role active transportation can play in the future of Simcoe County, and how it can be supported through policy change, community engagement, and understanding and adapting international and local best practices.

The recommendations included in this report are derived directly from what we heard from the public over the course of the day.

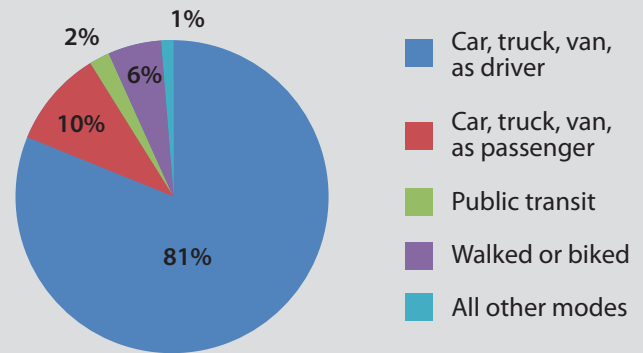


# Community Snapshot

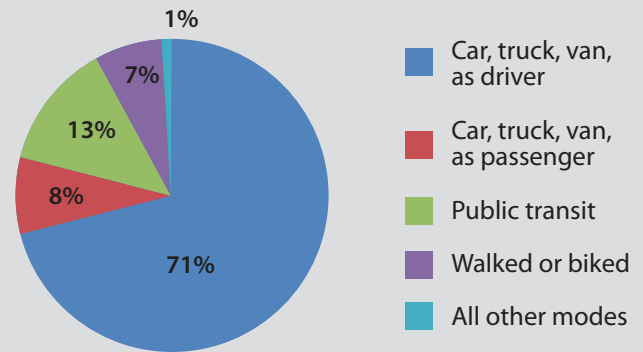


The Municipalities of Simcoe County

## Mode of transportation to work (Simcoe County)



## Mode of transportation to work (Ontario)



### Simcoe County population

2006: **422,204**

2001: **377,050**

### Regional population growth forecasts

2011: **467,400**

2036: **705,820**

25 year growth rate: **51%** <sup>ii</sup>

### Mode of Transportation to work (Simcoe County):

Car, truck, van, as driver: 162,790 (**81%**)

Car, truck, van, as passenger: 18,895 (**10%**)

Public Transit: 4,745 (**2%**)

Walked or Biked: 11,460 (**6%**)

All other Modes: 2,565 (**1%**)

Total: 200,455

### Simcoe County Health Snapshot <sup>iii</sup> (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit)

Overweight: **37.0%** (above Ontario average)

Obese: **18.2%** (above Ontario average)

Leisure-time physical activity, moderately active or active: **59.6%** (above Ontario average)



# Chapter 1

## Liveable Communities for All: Creating an 8-80 City

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*Creating a More Liveable and Sustainable Simcoe County.*

# What is an 8-80 City?

## **8-80 Cities are communities for people.**

They are cities that reflect social equality and promote people's happiness in their urban form.

They nurture our need to be physically active by providing safe, accessible and enjoyable places for everyone to walk and bike in their daily routines.

They recognize that people are social creatures and prioritize human interaction by fostering vibrant streets and great public places where people can rest, relax and play.

8-80 Cities encourage sustainable and healthy lifestyles for people regardless of age, gender, ability or social status



# The 8-80 Rule

When roads are built, planners do not build one road for new drivers and a separate road for experienced drivers.

When creating sidewalks and bikeways, we cannot make them accessible only to experienced cyclists and agile pedestrians.

8-80 Cities has created a rule of thumb to help individuals when they are evaluating bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure: We have dubbed it the 8-80 Rule.

## Step 1:

Think of a child that you love and care for who is approximately 8 years of age. This could be a child, grandchild, sister, brother, cousin etc.

## Step 2:

Think of an older adult, approximately 80 years of age, who you love and care for. This could be a parent, grandparent, friend etc.

## Step 3:

Now, think about the pedestrian infrastructure and bikeways in your community. Would you send your child to cross that intersection? Would you send your grandmother out to buy milk riding her bike? If so, then the sidewalk or bikeway is safe. If not, then it must be improved.

Every citizen, including all elected officials and staff as well as community members should keep this rule in mind when thinking about their neighbourhoods.

What if the 8-80 Rule guided everything we did in our community including pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, parks and other public spaces? Eventually we'd end up with a great city for all.



# Key Concepts for Creating People-oriented Communities

## The Benefits of an 8-80 City

A city is only  
a means  
to a way of **life.**

If we choose to plan and design our cities for people, we must do it in a way that maximizes people's happiness and quality of life. For decades, city planning has been focused on cars' mobility. A human-scaled approach to planning recognizes the benefits to providing safe and convenient facilities for people to walk and bike as a means of transportation and recreation. This approach also emphasizes the importance of parks, trails, and public spaces as great places for interaction and community cohesion.

### Walking and bicycling: More than just fun and games

It would be easy to write a laundry list of the perfect conditions needed to make the case for active transportation. These could include increased public concern and awareness about environmental degradation, climate change, a global economic crisis, an obesity epidemic, and worsening traffic congestion. Today, all of these conditions exist, creating a perfect storm of challenges that make investing in safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities a relevant solution to many of today's problems.

8-80 Cities has developed the **EARTH umbrella concept**, which represents a shelter from the storm of challenges we are facing today and highlights some of the most significant benefits of walking and bicycling and great public places.

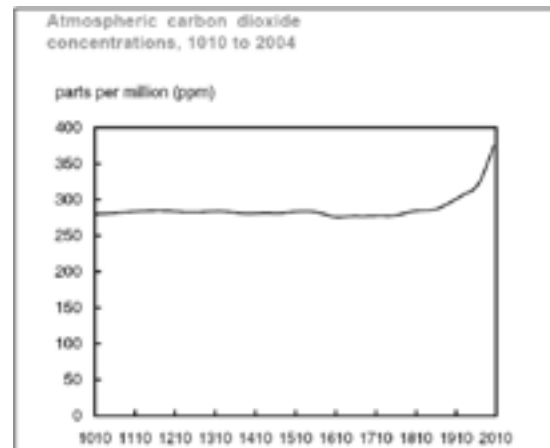
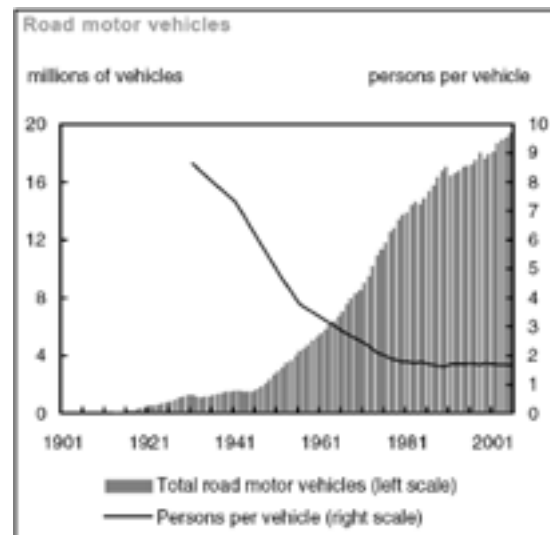


# The **EARTH** concept:

## **E**nvironment

Only a few years ago, scientists questioned the very existence of human-induced climate change. Now there is general agreement within the scientific community that global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide have increased markedly as a result of human activities, particularly through the use of fossil fuels and land use change.<sup>iv</sup> In 2004, emissions from the transportation sector accounted for 25% of all the GHGs emitted in Canada. Private vehicles alone (passenger cars and trucks) accounted for over 11% of total GHG emissions. With such a significant portion of our emissions released through transportation, moving toward more sustainable transportation options such as public transit, bicycling, and walking could drastically reduce Canada's carbon footprint.

Shifting away from private car use and toward non-motorized forms of transportation is less daunting than one might think. Research shows that a large percentage of trips made by car are within walking and bicycling distance. Metrolinx, the regional transportation authority in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), reported in 2008 that 40% of the total trips taken across the GTHA were within biking distance (under 5 km) and 17% were within walking distance (under 2 km).



The number of motor vehicles on the road has increased sharply in the last 30 years, as the number of people per vehicle has decreased. A dramatic rise in carbon dioxide, the most prevalent greenhouse gas, has accompanied this trend.

# Economic Activity

In the 19th century, wealth was measured in terms of land, making land the most valuable of any asset. By the 20th century, the market's focus had shifted to capital. Today, knowledge is at the heart of the economy. Attracting and retaining highly educated, creative people is the greatest economic challenge facing cities in the 21st century.

In an ever-more globalized world, the most skilled people—be they carpenters, artists, or doctors—can live anywhere they choose. Why live in Toronto and not Vancouver, Paris or Sao Paulo? A walkable, bikeable community is a critical factor in creating lively, attractive neighbourhoods, and quality of life has become a main element of economic competitiveness.

Mercer's Quality of Living survey, used by thousands of companies to decide where to locate their offices, recognizes the importance of active transportation. Pedestrian and bicycling facilities positively influence 5 of the 10 categories used in the survey to determine the best places to set up a business.<sup>v</sup>

Vibrant commercial districts, and the small businesses which populate them, rely heavily on foot traffic. Walkable, bikeable neighbourhoods are safer, more attractive, and more pleasant to shop in. Traffic calming is so good for business that business owners in affected areas often go from initial fear over the loss of parking to passionate support for further traffic calming, both in their own neighbourhood and in others.<sup>vi</sup>

Tourism is a billion dollar industry. Have you ever heard anyone return from a vacation in Paris and talk about how beautiful the highways were? Great public spaces, pedestrian plazas, parks and trails attract tourists and generate economic activity. In 2007, tourism in Canada generated \$19.7 billion in government revenue alone.<sup>vii</sup> Tourists in urban areas are primarily pedestrians. Increased investment in the unique beauty of Canadian cities through well-placed trails, parks and public spaces will add to the appeal—and bank accounts—of our neighbourhoods.



Local business owners in Copenhagen had a huge boost in economic activity from increased foot traffic after car dominated streets were replaced with pedestrian-only streets.

# Recreation

In the year 1700, most physical activity occurred in the workplace. In North America in 2008, only about 5% of our physical activity occurred in the workplace, while recreational activities accounted for the highest percentage.

Walking, bicycling, and running are now some of the most popular forms of physical activities in the world. In addition, current trends show that people are turning increasingly to unscheduled and unorganized activities such as walking and bicycling as a form of daily exercise.

According to Statistics Canada's 2005 Community Health Survey, walking is by far the most popular form of physical activity in Canada, with bicycling ranked in the top five.<sup>viii</sup> These activities are free of charge, enjoyable in groups or alone, and accessible to all ages.

In order to build communities that facilitate participation in these activities, it is important to provide city dwellers with the facilities that encourage spending time outdoors. Well-maintained and managed trails, urban parks and public spaces allow residents to enjoy, relax and take pride in their city.

In addition, more localized recreational facilities encourage more frequent use by community members because people have both a physical and mental connection to them. That is, these facilities are physically accessible to users through a short walk or bike ride and are mentally connected to them as a result of frequent events, festivals and promotions. For example, you are probably more inclined to take your dog for a walk on a Thursday evening if you can walk to the nearby neighbourhood trail or park as opposed to driving to it. You may even be more inclined to take that walk if you can grab a coffee on your way, or if there are interesting things happening in and around the trails or park.

Recreation is something more than what people do on the weekend; by building and improving upon community trails, parks, greenways and public spaces, it can become part of people's daily routine and serve as a way to unwind, connect with nature, and to just have fun.



Figure 1: The ways in which we get our physical activity have changed drastically in the past 300 years, as recreation has come to play an increasingly important role in our lives and our physical health.

# Transportation

Transportation is about moving people, not about moving cars. Yet from the way some North American cities have been built, it would appear the opposite is true. Thirty-six percent of GTHA residents do not have a driver's license.<sup>x</sup> To live up to the Canadian principles of equity and accessibility, our cities must be built to allow the mobility of those who cannot—or choose not to—drive.

Furthermore, providing safe, extensive infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians has been proven to alleviate congestion. Such infrastructure paves the way for affordable, convenient transportation, which in turn can have a profound impact on the economy. Traffic congestion contributes to delays in moving goods, lost productivity and higher fuel costs. Congestion costs Ontario over \$5 billion in lost GDP every year.<sup>x</sup>

Cities like Copenhagen and Amsterdam have invested heavily in bicycling infrastructure and have achieved significant results. In Copenhagen, bike mode share<sup>xi</sup> has gone from less than 10% in 1975 to 36% in 2004, outperforming automobile mode share. With 329 km of cycling tracks in place, Copenhagen has continuously been improving its infrastructure.<sup>xii</sup> Furthermore, it recognizes that increasing active transportation use is a matter of planning-for- people and creating a cultural shift.



Transportation infrastructure must be designed for the mobility of all users, not just drivers.

# Health

Many Canadians today find themselves driving to the gym to walk on a treadmill. Meanwhile, 23% of Canadians over the age of 18 are obese.<sup>xiii</sup> Obesity is at the root of myriad diseases and health problems, and inactivity is one of the major contributing factors to obesity. Sedentary living is creating a huge strain on our healthcare system and our wallets.

Today, health experts agree that 30 minutes of moderate physical exercise daily can cut vulnerability to heart disease in half, control blood pressure, and reduce cholesterol. Experts say that exercise also increases energy levels and improves moods, sleeping habits and digestion.<sup>xiv</sup>

Building convenient and accessible pedestrian and cycling infrastructure makes it easier for physical activity to become a part of our daily routine. A study from the American Journal of Preventive Medicine published in 2004 found that every additional hour spent in a car was linked to a 6% increase in a person's chances of becoming obese. Conversely, each kilometer walked was linked to a 4.8% decrease in the chance of becoming obese.<sup>xv</sup>

Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 2, obesity rates for several highly industrialized countries consistently drop when alternative forms of transportation, such as walking, cycling, and public transit, are used.

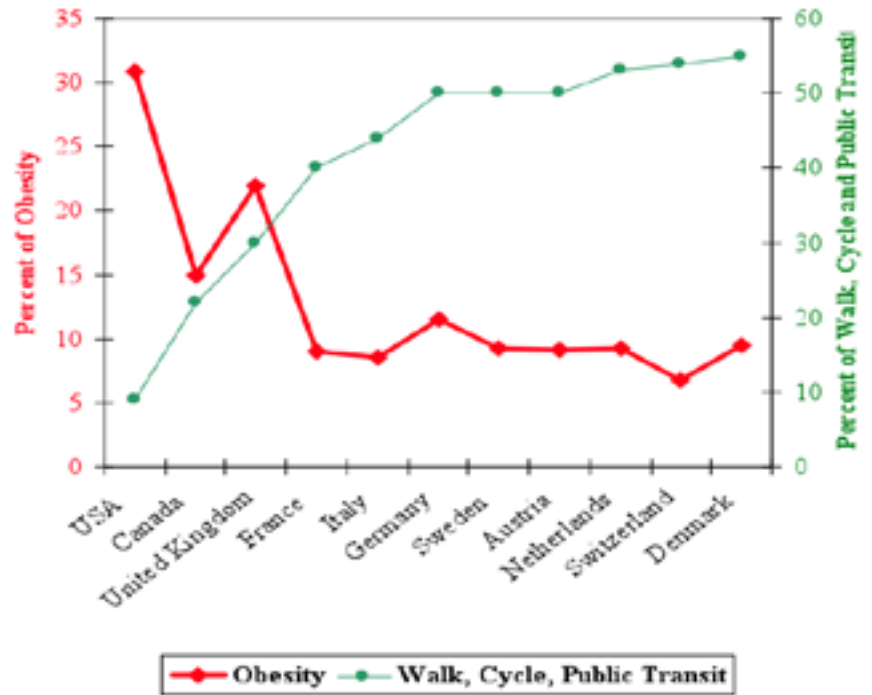


Figure 2: Obesity rates fall sharply with increased walking, bicycling and public transit use.

# Characteristics of a Great Place

## Public spaces have both “Emotional” and “Quantifiable” benefits.

The “Emotional” benefits greatly increase the quality of life of public spaces’ users and local residents. They are social equalizers and sources of happiness for community members. They also strengthen communities and improve safety in neighbourhoods.

The “Quantifiable” benefits of public spaces are ones that can be calculated in terms of several different criteria. They provide benefits that increase property values, increase tourism, increase economic activity, lower healthcare costs, and create greener and more environmentally sound cities by reducing GHG emissions.<sup>xvi</sup>

Creating great public places is one of the main characteristics of a successful city. One challenge that many cities face is the lack of such places and poor connections to surrounding neighbourhoods. It is difficult to define what exactly makes a great place; it is a subjective topic. Although each great place will be different to almost anyone, NYC’s Project for Public Spaces has come up with some common characteristics of great public spaces.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Good places to sit



It is simple but often overlooked. Seating is critical to creating an inviting space for people to rest, people watch and/or interact.

## Sociability/People in groups



People meeting in groups and being social with one another is an indicator of a great public space.

## Diversity



A place with a diversity of ages, ethnicities and abilities is another indicator of a great public space that is accessible and inviting to all.

## Affection



People are generally affectionate when they feel comfortable in a place

## High proportion of women



Women are much more discerning when it comes to choosing a place. If there are a high proportion of women in a place it usually means the area is safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing.

In a general sense, these symptoms paint the image of a safe, socially active, comfortable, and happy place. The place can be either a neighbourhood corner, a park, an entire community, a district, or a whole city. A variety of these places connected by a great active transportation system can create a city that has so many great places in it that it eventually becomes one great city. This is the goal of many cities; however, as big as they are, cities tend to forget that city life blooms on the street corner.



# Chapter 2

## The Liveable Community Project: Simcoe County

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*Creating a More Liveable and Sustainable Simcoe County.*

## Liveable Community Project Methodology

8-80 Cities recognizes that citizens have the greatest expertise when it comes to the communities in which they live, work, and play. 8-80 Cities' Liveable Community Project uses this idea as the basis for its approach to community engagement in promoting more walking- and cycling-friendly places. 8-80 Cities spent time in Simcoe County at the Springwater Council Chambers, where we facilitated an afternoon workshop and led an evening public presentation.

## Workshop

Monday March 14th, 2010, 1:00 – 5:00pm

### Description of the event:

On March 14th, 2011, Members of the 8-80 Cities team facilitated a workshop on how to improve walking, cycling, and parks and public spaces in Simcoe County. Mayor Linda Collins of Springwater Township delivered opening remarks, followed by a presentation by Gil Penalosa's entitled Creating 8-80 Cities: Moving From Talking to Doing. Participants in the workshop included municipal and regional staff as well as several city councillors from across the county. After Gil's presentation, participants were divided into small groups to discuss their visions for Simcoe County and the short-term and long-term goals needed to achieve their vision. The 8-80 Cities Team led a lively discussion with the groups about their recommendations and ideas for Simcoe County. A selection of the findings from the workshop is included in the Recommendations section of this report. For a full listing of ideas generated during the workshop, please see Appendix B.

# Public Meeting

Monday March 14, 2010, 7:00 – 9:00pm

## Description of the event:

On the evening of Monday March 14th, the 8-80 Cities team led a public meeting with members of the Simcoe County community. Although there was only a small group in attendance, Gil's presentation was followed by a lively discussion about how to make Simcoe County more walkable and bikeable. The session was attended by the Mayor of Springwater Township, Linda Collins, as well as a number of local city council members.



Mayor Collins discusses active transportation in Simcoe County with other workshop participants.



Workshop participants create their vision for Simcoe County

# Community Recommendations

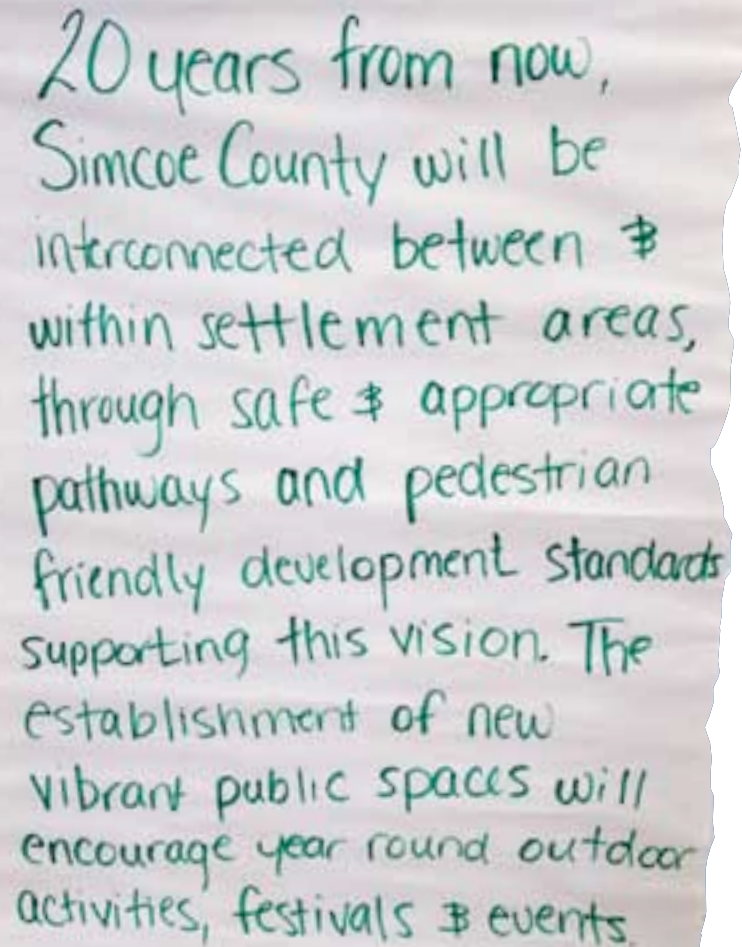
## A Vision for Simcoe County

A combination of hard work and a clear vision are essential in the development of any people oriented community. Working together in groups, participants were asked to write a vision statement for Simcoe County. Here is a sample of their visions:

“ Interconnected between and within settlement areas, through safe & appropriate pathways and pedestrian friendly development standards supporting this vision. The establishment of new vibrant public spaces **will encourage year round outdoor activities, festivals and events.** ”

“ Linked by a **convenient, safe, affordable,** multi-modal active transportation. Connecting open space, water courses, key road routes with tourism and service destinations for people of all ages and abilities. ”

“ Linked by a year-round, interconnected trails system that creates physical spaces for social interaction that **enhances the economy, promotes public participation, and contributes to an exceptional quality of life** for residents of all ages. ”



20 years from now,  
Simcoe County will be  
interconnected between &  
within settlement areas,  
through safe & appropriate  
pathways and pedestrian  
friendly development standards  
supporting this vision. The  
establishment of new  
vibrant public spaces will  
encourage year round outdoor  
activities, festivals & events.

An inspiring vision statement created by workshop participants

## Short Term Goals:

- Reduce speeds on neighbourhood roads and improve traffic calming

Speed limits have a remarkable impact on the severity of incidents resulting from collision. Evidence from the United Kingdom suggests that about 45% of pedestrians hit by cars travelling at 30 m / hr (48 km / hr) are severely injured or killed. Incredibly, only 5% of pedestrians hit by cars traveling at 20 m / hr (32 km / hr) are severely injured or killed. 8-80 Cities recommends reducing speed limits and increasing traffic-calming measures on neighbourhood roads.



20 is Plenty - Citizens in the United Kingdom advocate reducing speed on residential roads from 30 to 20

- **Introduce festivals and events in the streets such as a Car-Free Sundays Program:**

Design and implement a Car-Free Sunday program to happen every Sunday between May and October. As our largest public space, streets are an important resource to promote recreational activities. Car-Free Sunday programs happen around the world and are an inexpensive way to close the streets to cars and open them to people to walk, bike, run, skate and dance. Car-Free Sunday programs have evolved to include innovative programming such as large-scale aerobics classes, rock climbing walls and yoga.



Car Free Sunday programs such as this one in Bogota, involve all sorts of recreational programming.

- **Involve the community in the development of new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.**

Improve and/or create policy mechanisms that enable quality public participation in the development of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Not only does public participation in the design and development of communities provide a diverse range of perspectives and produce new and innovative ideas, it helps residents take ownership in their communities, promoting better buy-in and usage of local programming and infrastructure.

# Long Term Goals:

- Provide way-finding signage to promote active transportation and the use of public transit:

Wayfinding signage should be added to main streets and off-road trails across Simcoe County, displaying the number of minutes to various destinations. The average person bicycles at 15 km/hr and walks at 5 km/hr. Signage should include transportation times for pedestrians and cyclists, where appropriate. Wayfinding signage is an important tool used to promote trails and access points, while adding an element of security for users.

Communities such as Wasaga Beach have adopted a wayfinding strategy. The Wasaga Beach Wayfinding Project is a comprehensive plan to "...include a hierarchy of wayfinding signage including town gateways, trailhead signage for hiking and cycling trails, interpretive display and signage, destination identifiers, on-road bicycle signage, and a series of iconic beach markers."<sup>xviii</sup> The project not only encourages people to get outside and enjoy their parks and public spaces, but it also increases the sense of place in Wasaga Beach



Bike friendly way-finding: An example of signage from Gresham, Oregon

- **Creating multi-modal linkages between communities, schools, community centres, and recreational and green spaces**

Investing in a county wide network of safe, convenient, and efficient on-road and off road active transportation corridors will provide residence an alternative to the car and encourage active transportation. By creating linkages that are attractive between neighbouring communities and interesting destinations, Simcoe County can further promote the area as a tourist destination for people looking to enjoy the outdoors and at the same time help contribute to the development of a healthier and more sustainable county.

- Create the option of walking or cycling from one municipality to the other by providing wide paved shoulders on county roads.
- Bring back the rail lines that once linked small communities together

- **Improve pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, signage, street lights, and footpaths.**

To boost the walkability of Simcoe County, the towns must continuously improve their pedestrian infrastructure. While well designed and maintained sidewalks are a good starting point, the county must pay attention to adding crosswalks, better signage and street lights and footpaths.

- Improve cycling infrastructure by adding physically separated bike lanes on arterial roads.

The City of Portland conducted a major study to understand the needs of their citizens with respect to cycling facilities. They found that 1% of their population bike regardless of cycling facilities. Another 7% cycle if cycling infrastructure gives the perception of safety (this includes bike lanes with painted lines). Thirty percent of the population do not bike regardless of the infrastructure provided. However, surprisingly, 62% of the population indicated they would cycle if the streets had physically separated bike lanes.

The City of Portland's study indicates that safety is a crucial motivating factor shaping individual cycling preferences. Simcoe County should work to build a network of physically separated bikeways on arterial roads within communities, and along routes linking the 16 municipalities in the County.



A pedestrian-friendly street in Ottawa, Ontario where there is physical separation between the different users of the street.



# Chapter 3

## Moving from Talking to Doing

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*Creating a More Liveable and Sustainable Simcoe County.*

# Moving from Talking to Doing

## NEXT STEPS



A group of concerned citizens and stakeholders have the power to advocate real change.

Applying this form of people-oriented planning can help cities become more liveable, enjoyable, and overall world-class destinations. But how do we turn these ideas into action? 8-80 Cities has spent many years working on walking, bicycling, parks, public spaces and trails in cities. After reflecting on its successes, 8-80 Cities has identified the following five elements that are necessary in order to move from talking to doing:

### Leadership

A movement needs many leaders. Having passionate, committed and knowledgeable leaders can inspire people to not only understand these issues but also act upon them. It's not about knowing everything; it's about motivating others and making them understand the importance of your work.

Planning and transportation issues can be incredibly complex and controversial. However, by having leaders who are more focused on doing the right things rather than doing things "right," cities can begin to develop on a human-focused scale.

Leaders often occupy positions of power, but this is not always necessary. You can become a leader in your community by gathering the knowledge and resources necessary to inspire and create action. Getting involved in relevant community events is a great way to get yourself connected to other actors within your community. Even if you are not leading, it is imperative that you make your voice heard by those who are. This can be done through emails, letters, petitions or events.

Although having passionate, progressive leaders in your area makes it much easier to implement change, don't give up if this is not the case. There are still four more factors that can turn [talking into doing](#).



## Ann C. Fenton

Physical Education Teacher  
Montgomery Village Public School  
Orangeville, Ontario, Canada

Ann was fed up with the chaos and idling that accompanied the drop-off time in the morning at her school, so she **took action!** When the students came back to school after the Christmas holiday, the school parking lot was blocked off and five zones were set up outside of the school where parents could drop off their children. Volunteers would help the children walk to school the remaining kilometre—in the middle of winter! Initially, many parents were upset with this change, but Ann dressed up as a pylon, the kids loved her, and parents soon warmed up to the idea as well.

## Political Will

When it comes to building infrastructure in a city, community members can only do so much. The plans and proposals for new roads, trails, public spaces and parks need to come from our politicians. It takes guts to take an innovative idea and move forward with it—but the rewards of being that person are considerable and long lasting. In Copenhagen, the first steps toward improved public spaces met with an intense backlash on multiple fronts. Not only were business owners worried about the impact on their profits, but drivers were worried about decreased car mobility. Despite this reaction, the leaders in office had a long-term vision that they stuck with—and now residents are grateful for their politicians' foresight. With the improved economic activity and decreased congestion brought about by their plans, Copenhagen's placemakers proved that great politicians and city staff with the courage to create real change can build world-class cities.

That having been said, politicians work for the people. If there is no visible constituent support for an issue, then politicians will be much less likely to fight for it. We cannot expect politicians with so many matters on their minds to focus on issues that are not being brought to their attention. Local groups and citizens must work together to make these topics visible to politicians as well as encourage them to make the gutsy decisions necessary to create real change.



One of Copenhagen's successful pedestrian plazas

## “Doers” in the public sector

It's not enough for politicians to talk about their goals and ideas; someone needs to do the work to follow through on those promises. An excellent example of this is Janette Sadik-Khan, Transportation Commissioner for New York City who was inspired by the cycling facilities that she saw around the world. Thirty days after she announced New York City's new bike plan, a physically separated bicycle lane was set up on 9th Avenue. Sadik-Khan is now transforming the meaning of transportation in New York City and being hailed as a visionary for her actions.

It is a common theme within the public sector to find different departments, who often work on similar or neighbouring infrastructure, to lack communication or cohesion. Often you will find work being duplicated because certain departments don't think to, or prefer not to, work together. Local organizations, citizens, and politicians must work to bring these departments together in order to improve co-operation and efficiency. For example, many municipal, regional and provincial transportation and public works departments build infrastructure without consulting each other. This often leads to different areas of the same road or public space being worked on at different times or with different characteristics. This is not only a waste of time, but a massive waste of money. Promoting a more cohesive communication system will help to align departments in both principle and practice. This alignment will in turn lead to more efficient and effective action.

Everyone in the public sector should remember that citizens are paying them to get things done, not to have 20 reasons why things can't be done.



New York City's first physically separated bicycle lane.

## Community Engagement

It takes the work of a strong and active community to make change in our cities. Everyone has their own cause, so if you aren't writing letters and making calls to city officials, then someone else is. If city representatives are not hearing about an issue, they have no way of knowing that it is a priority to their constituents. So citizens need to speak up, speak to their elected officials and make it known that transportation is an important issue in this community – politicians are paid to listen. Get involved through public meetings or the media (e.g., letters to editors).

## Sense of Urgency

With carbon emissions pushing the globe's temperature to rise at record rates and unpredictable fuel prices making it difficult for households and public agencies alike to budget from one year to the next - transportation is one of the most urgent issues facing us today.<sup>xix</sup> So why aren't we feeling the pressure to invest in active transportation? The connections are not being made concerning the important role that transportation will play in meeting the great challenges of this generation. A lack of urgency permits complacency and procrastination – attitudes that cities cannot afford. The importance of this issue must be made clear so that all stakeholders pay attention and begin taking action now. With the issues of traffic congestion, obesity, global warming and the financial crisis, this should be very clear, but it is not.





SÖTORVET

Festufestival

# Chapter 4

Tool Kit: Case Studies on Walkable, Bikeable Communities with Vibrant Parks and Public Spaces

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*Creating a More Liveable and Sustainable Simcoe County.*

# Case Studies on Walkable, Bikeable Communities with Vibrant Parks and Public Spaces

Sometimes you need to see it to believe it. Each of the following cities had hurdles to overcome similar to those faced in Springwater. Taking inspiration from their innovation and experiences can help us to work towards building our cities into unique, healthy and happy communities.

## Chain of Lakes – Minneapolis

Minneapolis has 64 km of dedicated bicycle lanes along its streets and 134 km of off-street bicycle paths.<sup>xxi</sup> The city has placed a lot of emphasis on getting their commuters to bike, walk or use transit. The Minneapolis Pedestrian Program has resulted in 92% of streets having sidewalks on both sides which totals 2900 km of sidewalks.<sup>xxii</sup> There are also 100 pedestrian/cycling bridges.<sup>xxvi</sup>



Integrating walking into one's daily routine means providing safe infrastructure for people to do so, such as this bridge that is exclusively for walking and cycling

The Bike Walk Ambassador Program has also been implemented, where ambassadors work in Minneapolis and in the 13 adjacent communities to educate people about the importance of increasing walking and biking and minimize driving.<sup>xxiii xxiv</sup>

Another program that has recently been initiated is the Bicycle Rack Cost Share Program where the city shares the cost of putting in bike racks in front of private businesses to encourage employers to do so.<sup>xxv</sup>

Much of the rapid walking and cycling promotion and infrastructure improvement is due to the Non-motorized Transportation Pilot program which has been providing Minneapolis and its adjacent communities as well as three other communities in the US with



This section of Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis is a high quality pedestrian environment, including benches, trees, garbage cans, pedestrian-level lighting and comfortable sidewalk widths.

Putting their beautiful waterfront scenery to good use, Minneapolis created their famous “Chain of Lakes.” With parks and trails located along the lakeshore and 21.4 kilometres of walking/jogging/biking friendly pathways, the Chain of Lakes provides a safe and accessible opportunity for residents to actively transport and enjoy themselves.

The Chain of Lakes system is a part of an even larger system of trails that totals 80.6 kilometres. This is the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway. This trail system connects users from many parts of the city, and provides its users with a variety of activities. Along the Grand Rounds there are many hiking, biking and skiing trails. There are also golf courses, scenic pathways, historic sites, gardens and many other natural features to explore.<sup>xxviii</sup>



Minneapolis residents and visitors making the most of their waterfront location.

They have also implemented programs to promote cycling such as the Guaranteed Ride Home program, which provides free transit passes to cycling commuters for use in an emergency.

the funds for walking and cycling community improvement projects.<sup>xxvi xxvii</sup>

It draws over 14 million visitors a year. With the purchase of food, services and accommodation that those visitors make, the trails are generating millions of dollars in revenue for the city.

## Ottawa, Canada A City That Embraces All Seasons

Ottawa is home to the Rideau Canal Skateway in the winter, which is the largest outdoor skating rink! With a length of 7.8 km, this is a great site for outdoor events and festivals that often take place on the weekends.<sup>xxix</sup> Not only do many people come out to the canal for recreational skating, many also use it as a means of transportation to work or school.



Rideau Canal Skateway in Ottawa spans 7.8km.

Ottawa is also home to a network of 180 km of bike paths throughout the city known as the Capital Pathway.<sup>xxx</sup> Gatineau Park is another highlight of Ottawa, where one can enjoy the 361 square km for one's recreational activity of choice – in addition to the protected wildlife and green space there are many trails for biking, hiking or cross-country skiing.<sup>xxxi</sup>



Pedestrian street through shopping district with outdoor cafes creates a safe public space.



Ottawa River pathway is shared among different users.

## Car Free Sunday

Every Sunday from Victoria Day to Labour Day between 6am and 1pm, Ottawa closes its streets to cars and opens them to people. Over 65 km of roadways are shut down each week allowing citizens and tourists to actively enjoy the city's streets. There are attractions to see along the route as well, such as the Hog's Back Falls, the Experimental Farm, Dow's Lake Pavilion, Mooney's Bay and the Parliament buildings. <sup>xxxii</sup> Car free Sundays are a great way to foster a community atmosphere – not only do they keep people active, but they change our perceptions by presenting our well paved, wide and comfortable roads as public places for all citizens.



Sunday Bikedays in Ottawa — enjoying wide open road space on the city's summertime Car Free Sunday program.

## Copenhagen, Denmark The best cycling city in the world

83% of residents think Copenhagen is great to cycle in.

2006 → 36% cycled to workplaces

2015 → goal is 50% of commuters cycling

## Every day 1.2 million kilometres are cycled in Copenhagen

Serious cyclist casualties dropped from 124 to 92 between 2004 and 2006

388 km of cycle routes

**55% of all trips are cycled!** <sup>xxxiii</sup>



The best cycling city in the world was not created overnight; the City of Copenhagen has spent the last 30 years transforming the roads and communities into cycling-friendly environments, starting primarily in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1973 oil crisis struck a nerve in Denmark and it is then that residents witnessed how much they were relying on cars and how easily that could be compromised. Thus, decisions were made in the city of Copenhagen to begin to minimize how much they rely on oil by promoting green energy production and walking and cycling.



Bicycle parking can be found everywhere in Copenhagen.

Significant funds were allocated towards the implementation of adequate cycling infrastructure and programs. It is the consistent planning and prioritizing of cyclists that has created the city as it is today.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Not only was Copenhagen transformed into a cycling city through proper infrastructure, such as bike routes and bike parking, but also through various programs such as the bike-sharing program. Cars are also highly taxed through parking and insurance which has incentivised the use of bikes.

Because the infrastructure for cycling is safe and separated from motor vehicles, cycling in Copenhagen is in no way limited by clothing or shoes. It is common to see businessmen in their suits or ladies in their high heels. In fact, it has turned into a fashion statement. The evidence can be found everywhere throughout the city that cycling is highly valued, promoted and prioritized. Not only is there a vast cycling infrastructure network but there is also an amazing network of pedestrian-only streets where people can enjoy the shops, markets and cafes. There are public self-cleaning washrooms that have been placed all around the city. There are parks, green spaces and events to enjoy throughout the city and with the abundance of bicycle parking (both indoor and outdoor), riding your bike to all these areas is made easy and convenient!

## Winter Cycling in Copenhagen, Denmark

In light of Ontario's winters, some might say that cycling infrastructure is a waste of time and money, claiming that even if bike-ways were cleared and salted, no person would want to leave the comfort of their car for the cold of winter. In fact, a number of cities with cold, snowy winters have looked past this perceived impediment and found such perceptions to be unfounded. In Copenhagen, Denmark, 30% of residents cycle to work and 70% of those cyclists continue to bike even during Copenhagen's cold, snowy winters.<sup>xxxv</sup>



Copenhagen is filled with public spaces such as parks, markets, pedestrian-only streets, cafes, beach trails and more.



Commuters make their way to work during a Copenhagen winter. 70% of cyclists continue to ride during Copenhagen's winters.



Public washrooms such as this one can be found all over Copenhagen.



# Appendix A

## Walking, Cycling, & Public Spaces

### Liveable Community Workshop

#### Goal Setting Exercise

##### Instructions:

Keeping your vision statements in mind, think through the key components that will help Simcoe County reach its goals. Pay close attention to short term goals that are low cost, low risk and highly visible and longer term goals that are more strategic and may require a capital budget. These short and long term goals play a critical role in any active transportation plan.

##### 1. IMPATIENS:

low cost, low risk, high visibility ideas that are easy to implement.

List at least two low cost actions that could be taken this year.

(Note- these recommendations can include physical improvements, policies, programming and education)

Pedestrian-friendly

Cycling-friendly

Great Parks and Public Places

##### 2. ORCHIDS:

higher cost, longer-term ideas with a greater need for planning and resources.

List at least two actions that could be taken in 2-5 years that would have the biggest impact.

(Note- these recommendations can include physical improvements, policies, programming and education)

Pedestrian-friendly

Cycling-friendly

Great Parks and Public Places

# Appendix B

## Data from Springwater Workshop Activity

### **Pedestrian friendly:**

1. The ability to walk from one municipality to the other with paved shoulders on better roads
2. Bring back the rail lines that once linked each small communities together
3. Better mapping of the trails system of lands owned by the county
4. More focus given to existing communities to have more parking available
5. Information available to out of town visitors
6. Widening of sidewalks
7. Increase accessibility for wheelchairs and scooters
8. Signage to promote and encourage walking, biking, carpool and public transit
9. Smaller rural schools vs. One large school
10. Accessibility to corner stores, grocery stores, schools and parks
11. Consult the community for public transit origins and destinations
12. Designate and identify pedestrian/bicycle routes
13. Incorporate pedestrians and cyclists throughout the design and development process
14. Bring school boards to the table

### **Bike Friendly:**

1. Trails from schools to parks
2. Bicycle lanes that perceive origins and destinations and separation from other modes of transit
3. Local investment vs. Widespread development
4. Reduce speed limits
5. Introduce support services to bring people back to point of origin
6. Bike train service

### **A Great Place:**

1. Natural environment preservation
2. Link recreational destinations
3. Develop festival to encourage walk & bike; i.e., Car Free Sundays
4. Create a central farmers/local market
5. Designate key destinations in each municipality
6. Link schools with community destinations
7. Create partnerships between schools and recreation centres
8. Increase green space, with a focus on gardens, fields and parks
9. Preserve local farmland
10. Linking water courses
11. Move decentralized parks and recreational facilities

### **A Vision for Simcoe County**

20-25 years from now Simcoe County will be:

1. To create a web of interconnected 8-80 communities in 5-10 years
2. Interconnected between and within settlement areas, through safe & appropriate pathways and pedestrian friendly development standards supporting this vision. The establishment of new vibrant public spaces will encourage year round outdoor activities, festivals and events.
3. Connected by active transportation corridors to vibrant urban and irresistible settlement areas and destinations both within the sixteen municipalities and cities and our neighbours.
4. Linked by a convenient safe, affordable, multi-modal active transportation. Connecting open space, water courses, key road routes with tourism and service destinations for people of all ages and abilities.
5. Linked by a year-round, interconnected trails system that creates physical spaces for social interaction that enhances the economy, promotes public participation, and contributes to an exceptional quality of life for residents of all ages.
6. Connecting communities and green space.
7. Linked through multi-use and designated thoroughfares, connect all the communities and the green spaces within, by engaging the public and elected officials.

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## **Chapter 1 Charts**

Produced by 8-80 Cities.

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