

RÉSEAU QUARTIERS VERTS ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS CANADA NETWORK

Bâtir ensemble la ville active / Co-Designing The Active City

Phase I of the [Active Neighbourhoods Canada \(ANC\)](#) project was launched in 2009 in response to the need for concerted action in Canadian cities to address the impact that the built environment has on public health. ANC is a partnership of organizations across Canada using participatory urban planning and intersectoral collaboration to reach their goal of green, active and healthy neighbourhoods. The ANC project is part of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Innovation Strategy to Achieve Healthier Weights in Canada's Communities. Between 2013 and 2017 (Phase II), ANC worked in 12 communities in Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta. Between 2017 and 2020 (Phase III), we will broaden the reach and impact of the ANC approach to benefit additional Canadian communities. Phase III will use the best practices of the first two phases and lead to sustainable changes.

WHAT IS AN ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD?

An active, green, and healthy neighbourhood is a neighbourhood redesigned to celebrate the use of shared public space, including streets and parks. These neighbourhoods support walking, cycling and other means of active transportation for everyone, paying particular attention to children, by providing safe and welcoming urban design. Based on a vision of long-term “liveability”, these neighbourhoods are designed collectively. The approach proposed by the project fosters community linkages, encourages a connection with natural systems and allows citizens to develop a sense of belonging. We call this approach “participatory urban planning”.

There is a growing body of literature that demonstrates a link between a built environment that is appropriate and safe for active transportation and public health and health inequality. ANC's priority is to address health equity, and therefore we have undertaken projects in priority neighbourhoods, and work on improvements to public space. The project gives a voice to vulnerable people in our processes, which is a way to contribute to health equity.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE APPROACH FOR PHASE III?

The [Public Health Agency of Canada's Innovation Strategy](#) embraces a Population Health Promotion Intervention Research approach in three phases. This approach promotes the development and testing of programs and policies that reduce health and social risk factors by addressing underlying social, economic and environmental conditions through inter-sectoral action, systems thinking, and consideration of context.

The ANC team works across Canada to help people design their communities at a human scale with vibrant spaces and streets that foster health, activity and connection. We demonstrate meaningful community engagement with support from local city-building professionals to build a practice of collaboration with residents.

Finally, over the long term, we facilitate changes to policy and the built environment. These changes impact health through urban designs that increase physical activity and community connection, and policies that address health equity by focusing on communities that experience marginalization in the practice of city building and are in need of investments in healthy public spaces and safe streets for all ages and abilities.

With our Pan-Canadian partners, we are building professional practice resources, consolidating evidence and promoting our approach to address healthy weights across Canada. The goal is to build a participatory health equity focused city-building practice and champion policy changes that support its implementation at different jurisdictional levels.

WHAT IS THE INTERVENTION STRATEGY?

Our theory of change is based on two main models: "The triangle that moves the mountain" and "Diffusion of innovation", which aim to create impact through three primary mechanisms:

- Community Engagement: Individual factors and behavioral changes, through physical changes to the built environment of communities;
- Relevant Knowledge: Changes within professional city-building sectors on how to engage diverse communities and work collaboratively;
- Political Will: Policy change to provide tools that guide decision-makers to incorporate health equity into urban design and transportation projects.

Project activities include :

- Involving communities in the urban planning process;
- Testing new practices for citizen involvement and intersectorial collaborations;
- Planning and implementing neighbourhood designs;
- Conducting research activities and sharing best practices;
- Developing training platforms, university curriculum, guides, toolboxes, factsheets, etc.;
- Offering professional development and training opportunities;
- Working with stakeholders in a variety of sectors;
- Engaging citizens, professionals, and decision-makers;
- Sustaining policy development, and incorporating health and equity into the design of neighbourhoods.

WHO RUNS THE PROJECT?

The Active Neighbourhoods Canada Network stems from an innovative national partnership between three organizations, informed by principles of participatory planning and environmentally responsible urban design. Although the work is in different provinces, the Montréal Urban Ecology Centre (MUEC), Sustainable Calgary Society (SC) and the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) have the same field of intervention: co-designing active cities. Over the past four years, and with the support of local citizens and partners passionate about their neighbourhoods, we have transformed and equipped 12 communities using the principles of participatory urban planning and build tools and knowledge for all Canadian communities.

To know more about the project: www.participatoryplanning.ca (From January 2018)

MUEC: <http://www.ecologieurbaine.net/fr/activites-et-projets/projets/reseau-quartiers-verts>

TCAT: <http://www.tcat.ca/project/active-neighbourhoods-ontario/>

SCS: <http://sustainablecalgary.org/home/anc/>