

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Milwaukee's Fresh Coast Schools Green Infrastructure Project*

- **Year Complete:** 2021
- **Local Government:** City of Milwaukee, WI
- **Local Foundation:** The Fund for Lake Michigan

Project Purpose

To promote equity and sustainability in Milwaukee Public Schools with natural schoolyards, outdoor classrooms, and green infrastructure.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

The City has always viewed collaboration as the means to an end. Sustainability work is an enormous endeavor, with work to be done in all facets of city government, business, and the community. However, for years, the City was hesitant to focus too much effort on the local school district because of its huge scale and its separate governance structure. Helping the district hire a dedicated sustainability staff to carry out projects created the connection needed to bring sustainability to the school system through tangible projects with broad community support. The City now regularly partners with the school district on sustainability plans and projects.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

- The first lesson in building relationships with local funders is to relate to each other as people. This means meeting with each other, and not just when you want to ask for project funding. It means having coffee and building a shared vision, and most importantly, building trust.
- Secondly, relationships are built by starting with small projects and delivering them well. Then you can build into larger project budgets.
- Finally, it's important to listen to the advice of funders. They have worked with many organizations, heard many grand plans, and have seen what works.

Additional Information and Resources

More information on the City of Milwaukee's ongoing effort to improve local schools with Green Stormwater Infrastructure installation can be accessed [here](#).