

EcoDistricts **SUMMIT**

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SUSTAINABILITY

R E P O R T

Event Management & Coordination by:



Social Enterprises

OVERVIEW

Conference Description

The EcoDistricts Summit is the world's only leadership event dedicated to sustainable & equitable neighborhood- and district-scale development. Each year, the Summit gathers leading city makers, policy makers, developers, designers, financiers, and community leaders from North America and beyond to collaborate, explore, and inspire the next generation of neighborhood development. We focus on projects, professionals and advocates who are passionate about the interconnected issues of equity, resilience, climate action, health, placemaking, connectivity, economic opportunity and regenerative design.

Highlights



DATE:
November 4-5,
2019



ATTENDEES:
302



LOCATION:
Pittsburgh, PA



VENUE: August
Wilson Center



EVENT FEATURES:
6 program tracks, 2 keynotes, 1 plenary session,
2 receptions, 5 tours

Attendee Profile

Professionals attend from a wide range of industries, with the highest percentage from Architecture, Planning, Urban Development, Housing, Community, and Economic Development, as well as Energy, Technology, Environment, and Climate related fields.

CLIENT GOALS

Overview

EcoDistricts is advancing a new model of urban development to empower just, sustainable, and resilient neighborhoods and that means environmental sustainability and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are a key component of the EcoDistricts Summit. Social Enterprises was hired to work together with the EcoDistricts team to develop and implement specific goals in these areas.

DEI Goals

Social Enterprises and the EcoDistricts team worked together to create specific, measurable goals for the EcoDistricts Summit along with best practice guidelines for the event. Some of the goals included:

- A 50:50 ratio between speakers who identify as male or female
- Ensuring 30-40% of speakers identify as non-White/person of color
- At least 30% of attendees identifying as a category other than White
- 50% of event vendors to be women or minority-owned businesses
- Selecting a venue in-line with the values of the EcoDistricts Summit
- Inclusivity practices to include gender-neutral restrooms, private spaces for attendees to utilize as needed, and preferred pronoun options for name tags
- Providing a land acknowledgement during the event

Guidelines for Program Submissions

The EcoDistricts Summit collected speaker submissions through an online Call for Proposals, promoted via the website, email, and social channels as well as through community partners and contacts. Submission guidelines included core topic areas and desired session outcomes, all revolving around themes of environmental sustainability and equity and inclusion policies. Proposals were reviewed by both the EcoDistricts National Advisory Committee and the EcoDistricts Summit Host Committee (composed of almost 50 Pittsburgh-area leaders).

CLIENT GOALS

Core Topic Areas

- Equitable development best practices, including racial equity assessment and community benefit agreements that promote economic opportunity & community stability
- Neighborhood-scale resiliency
- District scale net zero energy and water and climate action
- Comprehensive ecological design
- Creative and cultural placemaking
- Next generation green building and infrastructure
- Neighborhood-scale health and wellness
- Smart districts and the role of technology

*Call for Proposals and selection of program topics was handled internally by EcoDistricts. Social Enterprises provided recommendations but did not provide direct oversight.

Environmental Sustainability Goals

Social Enterprises worked to implement their [sustainability best practices](#) throughout the event as soon as planning started. These best practices encompass food & beverage, waste management, registration and badges, printing, venue and hotel selection, transportation, and purchasing practices.

Tracking of goals during planning

The Social Enterprises and EcoDistricts teams met at least 1x per month to cover events logistics and touch base on the progress of these goals. In part, this included:

- Regular registration reports by Social Enterprises with attendee demographic information to track progress toward our goals.
- Periodic review of the DEI best practice guidelines and goals to find out where we were falling behind, as well as revising the goals as needed to meet updated programming, attendee, and logistical needs.

SUSTAINABILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

Reception Venue

The EcoDistricts Block Party reception was hosted by the Phipps Conservatory. The Center for Sustainable Landscapes (CSL) at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens generates all of its own energy and treats all storm and sanitary water captured on-site. It is the first and only building to meet five of the highest green certifications, including LEED Platinum Certification and the Living Building Challenge

Summit Venue

The Summit was hosted at The August Wilson African American Cultural Center, a U.S. nonprofit arts organization based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that presents performing and visual arts programs that celebrate the contributions of African Americans not only in Western Pennsylvania, but nationally and internationally.



Gender neutral
restrooms available for
attendees



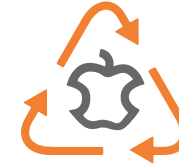
Private room available
for nursing mothers



Land
acknowledgement
provided during
opening remarks

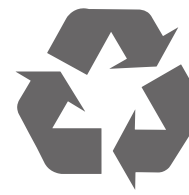
SUSTAINABILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

Food and Beverage



- Vegan options available at every meal
- No red meat served during event
- All beverages served in bulk containers
- No plastic straws, compostable straws available
- Due to venue restrictions, durable serviceware was not an option for meals and compostable serviceware had to be used instead. August Wilson Center didn't offer composting services, so the EcoDistricts Summit team worked with the Pennsylvania Resources Council and their Zero Waste program to make composting available during the event
- Leftover food was donated to 412 Food Rescue

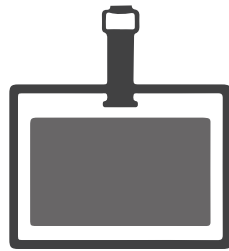
Printing and Signage



- Dates or year-specific elements are not used on signage that has the potential to be reused
- All year specific signage is printed on 100% recyclable enviroboard or falconboard
- EcoDistricts eliminated printed programs and instead offered attendees access to program and conference information through the event app Socio

SUSTAINABILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

Registration



Badge covers and unbranded lanyards were collected at the end of the event for reuse



Registration process utilizes a 100% paperless ticket system



Attendee-selected pronouns on badges

Vendors

The EcoDistricts Summit team prioritized working with vendors that represent Pittsburgh's diversity. Vendors included:

- Stage plants rented from Plantscape, a local company with a focus on sustainable practices
- Njaimeh Njie, a photographer, filmmaker, and multimedia producer. Her practice centers everyday people, narratives, and landscapes, with a particular focus on how black people perceive themselves and their experiences in the places they call home
- DJ Danielle Maggio, a PhD Candidate in Ethnomusicology at The University of Pittsburgh whose research interests include African American popular music, women in music history, music and media industry politics, and collecting, curating and archival practices
- PGH Fresh, a local meal delivery and catering company with a focus on fresh, healthy food
- Audio visual services provided by Flyspace Productions, a woman-owned business founded in Pittsburgh in 2006

SUSTAINABILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

Speakers & Attendees



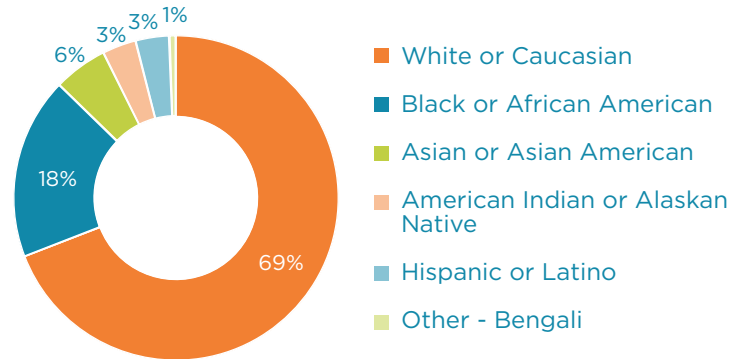
72 scholarships offered to low-income community leaders
24% of participants



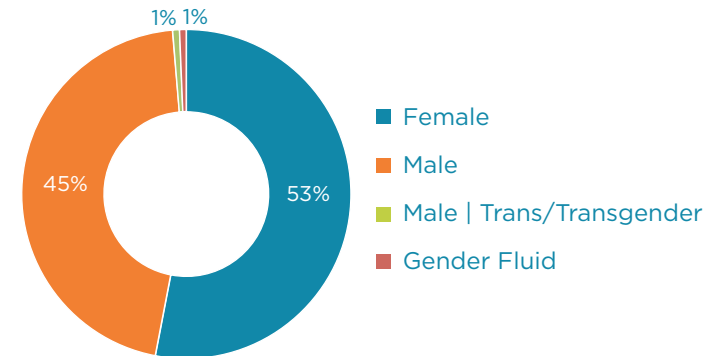
\$36,720
 Face value of sponsorships

Attendee Diversity

Which of the following racial categories do you self identify as/with?



Which of the following gender categories do you self-identify with?



Speaker Diversity

24%
 of speakers identified as a category other than White (goal was 30-40%)

46%
 of speakers identified as female, 54% identified as male (goal was approximately 50:50 ratio)

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Below are UN Sustainable Development goals and the corresponding EcoDistricts sustainability action:

GOAL 2: Zero Hunger

- Donation of leftover food

GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being

- Menu with a focus on healthy foods and vegetarian/vegan options

GOAL 5: Gender Equality

- 46% of speakers were female, 54% were male
- No all-male panels

GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality

- 72 scholarships offered to low-income community leaders

GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

- Printing practices
- Composting and recycling of waste
- Beverages and condiments served in bulk
- No single-use plastic product

GOAL 13: Climate Action

- No red meat served during event

In addition, the EcoDistricts Summit included sessions related to the below UN Sustainable Development Goals. See [our program](#) to learn more.

GOAL 2: Zero Hunger

GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being

GOAL 4: Quality Education

GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality

GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

GOAL 13: Climate Action

GOAL 14: Life Below Water

GOAL 15: Life on Land

GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Environmental Sustainability

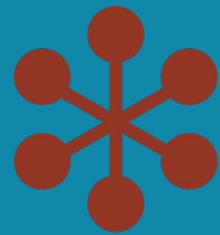
- Swap badges with covers for badges printed on fully recyclable paper with no covers
- Expand on vegetarian/vegan options served and further prioritize sourcing/supply chain tracking of menu items
- Take availability of venues and hotels with sustainability initiatives into account when selecting a city for the Summit, or when venue options are limited prioritize venues that are willing to work on implementing sustainable practices for the duration of the event
- Prioritize venues that allow for the use of durable serviceware to avoid the need to use compostables

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives

- Place greater emphasis on the importance of receiving CFP submissions that prioritize inclusivity, with specific recommendations/requirements for submitters
- Request voluntary demographic data during the submission process to allow for better data tracking of goals
- One on one email outreach to targeted speakers and organizations to invite historically marginalized voices
- Conduct a blind review of submissions (no names or demographic information) to avoid any unconscious bias on the part of the review committee
- Increase partnerships with regional and national organizations that serve a diverse audience to promote the event to a wider range of prospective attendees

Social Enterprises Areas of Improvement

The Social Enterprises team continually looks for ways to improve their knowledge of event sustainability, equity, and inclusion practices, and then uses this information to improve company best practices. This year, the SE team is reading *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi. We are also examining our best practices for our Call for Proposal documents, how we recruit program advisory committee members, and how to categorize event track topics to ensure we prioritize voices that are historically neglected or ignored by the mainstream.



Social Enterprises

Social Impact Events

We do events; high-level, innovative, social cause events committed to enhancing local communities by generating revenue and educating attendees to foster a sustainably minded world. Our ultimate goal is creating memorable collaborative experiences to empower sustainable communities.