

Environment Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday 7 May 2024

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)
Councillor Graham Neale (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Cassandra Brown
Councillor Youcef Hassaine
Councillor Leo Pollak
Councillor Reginald Popoola
Councillor David Watson
Anna Colligan
Simon Saville

Reserves

Councillor John Batteson
Councillor Rachel Bentley
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor Renata Hamvas
Councillor Adam Hood
Councillor Kimberly McIntosh

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Contact Julie Timbrell on 020 7525 0514 or email: julie.timbrell@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 28 April 2024



Environment Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday 7 May 2024
7.00 pm
Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
1.	APOLOGIES	
	To receive any apologies for absence.	
2.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT	
	In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear working days of the meeting.	
3.	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS	
	Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.	
4.	MINUTES	1 - 11
	To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024.	
5.	TOPIC: WASTE, RECYCLING, REDUCING FLY-TIPPING AND STREET CLEANING : USING RESOURCES BETTER	12 - 42
6.	WASTE IN PARKS	
7.	GROWING CITIES	43 - 68
	Growing Cities – the urban agricultural revolution, by Leanne Werner is enclosed.	
8.	SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE FREIGHT	

Item No.

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Page No.

9. SCRUTINY REVIEW ON BIODIVERSITY

10. WORK PROGRAMME

DISCUSSION OF ANY OTHER OPEN ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING.

Date: 28 April 2024

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”



ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Environment Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 27 February 2024 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)
Councillor Graham Neale (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Cassandra Brown
Councillor Youcef Hassaine
Councillor Leo Pollak
Councillor David Watson
Anna Colligan
Simon Saville

**OTHER MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Ruth Arnott, Community Gardening Coordinator
Tara Quinn, Head of Parks and Leisure
Julian Fowgies, Tree Services Manager
Juliet Seymour Head of Policy, Building Control and the
Historic Environment
Charlotte Brooks-Lawrie, Team Leader
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager , Scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Leo Pollak gave apologies for lateness.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There was none.

3. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There was none.

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

5. **SITOPIA**

A short video, introducing the work of Carolyn Steel, author, on her recent book Sitopia, was played.

The video can be found here: <https://www.carolynsteel.com/>

6. **INCREDIBLE EDIBLE**

The chair welcomed Victoria Sherwin, a director of Incredible Edible, and invited her to present on their work in Lambeth.

Questions were then invited and the following points were made:

- Incredible Edible said that they have close links with the borough of Southwark and work with council officers, including the officers embedded in community gardening. Southwark's employment of council officers to support community garden is very good and an approach Incredible Edible would like to see replicated by Lambeth Council. Lambeth is good is it is people led.
- Residents in Lambeth have requested seeds and compost to support local food production.
- An Open University report found that food often slips through departmental cracks in councils.
- Incredible Edible are pushing for an Agricultural Strategy in Lambeth.
- The Southwark Land Commission was commended by Incredible Edible as a good initiative. They said that food growing is limited by both resources and land. Land is difficult as there are tensions with the impetus to develop and profit.

Incredible Edible are keen to share knowledge and resources between Lambeth and Southwark.

- Incredible Edible is organising a Right to Food conference in April with Arup and Open University. This will look at developing a strategy and plans to go to decisions makers. Incredible Edible have facilitated the development of 'good stories', which has worked well and the relationship Arup came through that.
- A member asked if Incredible Edible would be encouraging the Mayor of London and local councillors throughout London to support a right to grow food, in order to get the whole of London signed up to this. Incredible Edible responded that there is support by the Mayor / GLA for food growing, but nothing is implemented yet.
- In New York there are 500 plots under use for urban agriculture. This is supported by the NYC council - see <https://www.grownyc.org/about>. New York City have a developed infrastructure, including providing seedlings / water/ trolleys as well as facilitating the provision of green space and education programmes.
- Incredible Edible recommended a policy in favour of Agroecology.
- Councillors noted that there are now several projects in council estates as a result of the community garden programme. One in Denmark Hill, with raised beds, saw a queue around the block and this demonstrates their popularity. Incredible Edible said it is important to invest in both people as well physical infrastructure, as Southwark has done for these recent initiatives.
- Incredible Edible supports local food growing groups, including fostering good relationships between residents, with non-violent communication workshops and other types of support. They emphasized that investing in people and community is very important for projects to thrive.
- Incredible Edible were asked if there was any data on the ability of community food growing to improve nutrition and impact on saving people money. In response they said this data is not yet available but they hope to gather this with future funding.

7. INSECTINSIDE

The chair welcomed Penny Frith, and invited her to present on her work documenting life in the bushes of a small Peckham park, Warwick Gardens: <https://insectinside.me/page/2/>

Penny delivered her presentation and during this the following comments were made:

- Southwark gardening service have offered to do more to facilitate biodiversity however Penny said she has deliberately advocated for low interventions to mimic local parks . She has dissuaded officers from either turning the park into a place managed for biodiversity and also unnecessary disruptions. Penny was asked if she persuaded Southwark's gardeners to not cut the grass. She confirmed she did but there is still some grass cutting in summer. She explained that a range of habitats are good, with both some areas left all year round and some cut short, as different insects have different preferences. Members suggested a protocol might help here.
- Penny reported that gardening by neighbours adjoining the park led to a loss of habitat and reduced insect life. Over time this may change as the logs were left to decay.
- A co-optee noted what the presentation demonstrated that in order to encourage the 672, approximate, different types of insects habitats are crucial and these can be supported by small interventions, such as leaving logs and not cutting some of the grass.
- Penny said she loves public speaking and would like to do more. There is also a book available documenting the park that she has produced. She has presented in a couple of schools. Penny said that it is now possible to get good pictures on phones - but a macro lens shows an additional amount of detail and beauty. She said one of the purposes for her project is to engage children and others in appreciating insects through the photographs and her talks. Members suggested an exhibition in the atrium.

8. MERISTEM

The chair reported that Meristem had met with her, both the co-optees, and the project manager informally, but unfortunately cannot

attend this evening. They have provided some information on their rain gardens and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

9. IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY IN SOUTHWARK : SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SUDS) DE-PAVING, POCKET PARKS, AND OTHER MEASURES

Simon Saville, Chair of Surrey & SW London Butterfly, and co-optee, presented.

Simon empathised the importance of catering for the whole life cycle of insects. He explained that insect are the base of food chain – so if land is manage for these then birds and other small mammals with thrive.

There are 5 key things required for a good habitat for insects:

- i. Food for mum and dad – pollinators like flowers and other sources of nectar.
- ii. Food for kids – these are the grubs and caterpillars that will later turn into flying insects. They spend a long time in this state.
- iii. Shelter – e.g Ivy
- iv. Water
- v. No chemicals

Simon said that wildlife corridors with the right plants to create a habitat for insects and that then to link up with Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) will maximise the land available.

One of the best habitat provision for insects is flower rich grassy areas, which thrive on low fertility soil. These have the added benefit of being low maintenance so lower cost to maintain.

He explained that if we build the right habitat the species will come.

Simon finished by noting that there are lots of potential partners; both people and groups, who are willing to give their voluntary time to improve biodiversity. The council has an opportunity to create an eco-system of people and groups to deliver the borough's plans.

10. SOUTHWARK NATURE ACTION VOLUNTEERS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATURE RECOVERY IN SOUTHWARK

The chair welcomed Southwark Nature Action Volunteers (SNAV).

The following presented:

- Anna Colligan , who is also a co-optee on the Commission,

- Jenny Morgan,
- Susan Crisp.

SNAV started by setting out their vision, which is that:

- For nature: Southwark's many species will more easily find the particular resources they need to survive and thrive,
- For people - all residents will easily experience significant nature close to home, with safe and pleasant active travel.

In order to achieve this SNAV said that Southwark's places for nature need to be Bigger, Better, More Joined Up and More Exciting.

SNAV proposed two types of nature corridors, set out in a map:

1. One for people and nature: 'Pedestrian/Nature Corridors' – these connect green spaces. These are continuous, or have very frequent "biodiversity stepping stones".
2. One for nature only: 'Strategic Nature Highways' – these inaccessible areas are critical for wildlife survival and nature recovery.

SNAV drew the Commission's attention to specific points to be noted from the SNAV Southwark Nature Connectivity Mapping Exercise:

- Peckham Rye Lane – nature corridors go there and then get lost, this is a major missing link
- Canada Water – this is an opportunity
- Old Kent Road – this is also an opportunity area, as presently a barrier that ought to be made permeable to nature.

Jenny Morgan explained that a lot of habitat is required to feed the diversity of insects and birds. In the absence of large swathes of land then joining up parks and pockets of land is the next best action. A large amount of plants are required in these areas to support insects and small mammals. Reducing cutting, keeping litter leaf, retaining water, will support worms, insects and biodiversity.

Anna Colligan explained that paving reduces the retention of water and washes pollutants into the river and sea. Retaining water through de-paving, better design, provision of rain gardens, will mean water is retained and pollutants removed.

Jenny went on to say that water is important, and certain types of creatures require ponds. Temporary scrap ponds are good for specific plants. Toads can breed if the ponds remain until May. She suggested that opening up rivers such as The Peck can create ponds and several cities have exposed rivers.

Trees are good, and it would be even better to increase the size of tree pits to include more than one tree and to make space for other planting, which can increase biodiversity. Jenny said that around 50% of the trees ought to be native but other pollinators are useful. Trees that can harbour insects, have nuts, berries or pollen is most helpful. Large tree pits can also encourage the community to adopt and maintain the planting.

More diverse habitat in parks would enable greater diversity. Hedgehogs need a large area. In cutting grass it is best to try and replicate animals grazing and the patterns created – for example sheep go close, whereas other animals graze higher. Disruption of the area is also good for diversity, including leaving bare soil. When de-paving it is possible to retain poor soil and the hard standing can be broken up as this creates different habitats.

Jenny said it is generally important to minimise light pollution as it is bad for bats, particularly near water.

Susan Crisp said that there are opportunities coming up with the Green Infrastructure Plan. She advocated for early engagement with the community and to take a co-design approach as there are many residents and groups who are invested in biodiversity. As the plan is not due for completion until 2026 it would be good to have a plan developing as an iterative process. She proposed beginning on the nature corridors and other steps, rather than waiting for a perfect plan in two years' time.

The chair then invited questions and the following points were made:

- Members asked what further steps could be taken by planning to improve biodiversity.
- In response Susan suggested that the Commission review Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and other emergent policies in a year's time. She also said that the climate and environmental SPD policies, that will go to cabinet in June and are linked to the Southwark Plan, ought to go beyond the requirements of the Mayor of London /GLA. She said to do that would require a good evidence base, and there is a good evidence base

around heating and cooling, flooding and health & wellbeing.

- Anna suggested looking at making the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) mandatory not optional. She also added that the thriving nature section of the resilient climate action plan is inadequate and does not discuss habitat protection, habitat creation or de-paving, at all.

11. OFFICER REPORT ON ENVIRONMENT ACT INCLUDING BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN & LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY PLAN

The chair invited the following officers to summarise the report provided in advance:

- Juliet Seymour, Head of Policy, Building Control and the Historic Environment,
- Charlotte Brooks-Lawrie, Team Leader.

Members were then invited to ask questions and the following points were made:

- Officers confirmed that they are now implementing the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) on a 100% of all schemes coming through to planning, with the appointment of two new staff; Charlotte Brookes and an ecology planning specialist .
- The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement is being met in all cases and often generating a higher net gain than the 10% stipulated, however as the base line is low the improvements can be low.
- There will be guidance in the forthcoming Householder SPD to encourage pre application discussions with biodiversity officers.
- Officers were asked if there was anything that can be done through BNG or otherwise deployed to prevent paving over front gardens or at least mitigate the impact on biodiversity. Officers responded that as this is usually 'permitted development' there is a right to do this, however they have considered developing best practice guides that the council could provide to householders. Officers clarified that BNG does not apply to householders.
- Officers were asked about opportunities for improved biodiversity on the Thames, particularly with the turn on of the super sewer, and asked if there is anything in place with the Port of London Authority (PLA). Officers said that they could

talk to the PLA.

- Members asked about Southwark becoming a [‘dark sky borough’](#) and officers said they had not considered this, however they do look at applications for light, if development is close to a SINC, or an open space, etc., and consider the impact.
- Officers intend to bring the following SPDs to cabinet in June:
 - a. [Climate and Environment Supplementary Planning Document](#)
 - b. [Householder Supplementary Planning Document](#)

12. OFFICER REPORT ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING AND GARDENING

Ruth Arnott, Community Gardening Coordinator provided a presentation. She was joined by the following officers, who assisted with questions:

- Tara Quinn, Head of Parks and Leisure,
- Julian Fowgies, Tree Services Manager.

Following on from the presentation the chair invited questions and the following points were made:

- Officers clarified that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) cannot be utilised to increase capacity for the community gardening programme, however even with the end of the Great Estates programme work will be continuing with residents in housing estates to increase gardening and food growing.
- The original vision was to facilitate the provision of a 1000 plots.
- Funding sources that have been identified include the Mayor of London’s Grow Back Greener. There will be more work done identifying funding in the future.
- A member commented on the huge waiting list for allotments and the demand this demonstrated, and asked if officers are continuing to engage with Allotment groups. Officers said

that these are volunteer associations that independently run allotment groups on council land, that the council lease, so they are not under direct control. They are invited to network groups and the service does want to foster partnerships while also sustaining the community garden initiatives. There is limited capacity, with two part time workers, so officers do need focus.

- Members noted the benefits of food growing in the report, and asked officers how this is promoted. Officers said that TRAs, word of mouth, social media and the food network are all utilised.
- Officers were asked if the council promote the keeping of Honey Bees and it was explained that the London Bee Keepers have advised there are sometimes too many hives. A co-optee, Simon Saville, endorsed this and said that there is a risk of competition with wild bees. He explained that while people often think that honey bees are endangered or in decline, but they are not, however wild bees are. Adding colonies of honeybees can actually be detrimental to nature if densities are high.

Simon provided the following summary and resources as follow up:

- Research that Simon conducted with colleagues, looking at the availability of floral resources in London (pollen & nectar, or 'forage'), as well as the distribution of managed bee hives in London, is on this website as The London Bee Situation, see <https://lbka.org.uk/london.html>. The Report itself is on the 1st link top right on the website.
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust have a position paper on managed honey bees, see <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/managed-honeybees/>
- Buglife (<https://www.buglife.org.uk/>) have said that if you introduce a new honey bee hive into an area, you should consider adding 2ha of good quality wildflower meadow to support them (that's 200m x 100m - about 4 football pitches).

13. SUSTAINABLE FREIGHT SCRUTINY REPORT

The chair drew members attention to an email sent by James Trimmer, Director of Planning and Development, Port of London Authority, to inform the review.

The chair said a draft report is close to completion and will be circulated for comment soon.

The Draft Walking and Cycling Plans will also be circulated for reference as there are quite a few interrelationships. At the outset the review set out to establish the extent the Movements plan (now the suite of Street for People plans) would reinforce sustainable freight.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.

Meeting ended at 10:25pm

Overview & Scrutiny

Waste and Cleaning – Using Our Resources Better

1. Background

Street Cleansing Standards

- 1.1 The street cleanliness in Southwark is measured by utilising the nationally recognised LEQ (Local Environmental Quality – NI195) methodology to ensure consistency and comparison with previous years. Three tranches of street cleanliness surveys take place each year. Each tranche of surveys concentrates on a number target wards, with seven or eight target wards surveyed in each tranche. This provides for a selection of streets in every part of Southwark to be surveyed each year. In each tranche of surveys, approximately 345 streets are surveyed, giving a total number of 1035 surveys each year. Each individual survey entails an inspection of a 50 metre stretch of the selected street, this is known as a transect. In each transect a grade of cleanliness is recorded for litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting.
- 1.2 Street cleansing assessors gauge the presence of each of the four elements within a specific transect using the following grades:

Litter

- GRADE A - no litter or refuse
 GRADE B - predominantly free of litter and refuse except for some small items
 GRADE C - widespread distribution of litter and refuse, with minor accumulations
 GRADE D - heavily littered, with significant accumulations

Detritus

- GRADE A - no detritus present on the transect;
 GRADE B - predominantly free of detritus except for some light scattering
 GRADE C - widespread distribution of detritus, with minor accumulations
 GRADE D - extensively covered with detritus with significant accumulations

An identical grading system is also used for graffiti and fly posting. Three Intermediate grades are also used. These are:

- B+, between Grade A and Grade B
- B-, between Grade B and Grade C
- C-, between Grade C and Grade D

- 1.3 Grades A, B+ and B are regarded as high/acceptable standards. Grade B- is regarded as partially acceptable standard. All other grades are regarded as unacceptable standards. The target levels of cleanliness are as follows:

- Litter - 93% of streets at a high or acceptable level of cleanliness
- Detritus - 90% of streets at a high or acceptable level of cleanliness
- Graffiti - 95% of streets at a high or acceptable level of cleanliness
- Flyposting - 97% of streets at a high or acceptable level of cleanliness

Current & Historical Street Cleanliness Performance

- 1.4 Table 1 below sets out the current and historical levels of street cleanliness that have been achieved. The cells highlighted green indicate where the targets have been met and those in pink indicate where the targets were not met. The litter, detritus and graffiti scores are reported through the Corporate Delivery Plan.

Table 1 – Current and Historical levels of street cleanliness

YEAR	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Flyposting
2019-20	93.7%	92.8%	95.8%	98.3%
2020-21	91.6%	89.6%	91.5%	99.3%
2021-22	93.4%	92.6%	91.7%	98.7%
2022-23	95.0%	95.4%	90.0%	97.9%
2023-24	93.4%	93.5%	88.3%	97.3%
Target	93%	90%	95%	97%

- 1.5 The information in Table 1 above shows that, other than in the COVID year of 2020/21, litter, detritus and flyposting targets are being met, but that the area of concern for street cleanliness is the level of graffiti, which does not meet the target.

Savings and investment

- 1.6 As with other services in the council, the Cleaning Service has been required to provide savings. The street cleaning savings provided in recent years are as follows:
- 2019/20 - £510k
 - 2021/22 - £390k
 - 2023/24 - £500k
- 1.7 During the past 10 years the targets for standards of cleanliness for litter, detritus, graffiti and flyposting have remained unchanged. The delivery of budget savings during this period has been managed as far as possible to minimise the impact on the cleanliness standards achieved by taking the following actions:
- Data analysis from cleanliness inspections to identify areas in need of improvement
 - Targeted cleaning to address locations identified as below target for the relevant indicators
 - Balancing resources to ensure highlighted areas receive the required amount of scheduled hours to meet and/or exceed the targets
 - Increased monitoring and supervision with regular performance reviews
 - Additional in-house inspections undertaken to ensure consistent levels are maintained in different parts of the borough.
- 1.8 In addition, under the Streets for People initiative there has been a programme of investment in the street cleaning services with an additional £500k awarded for 2023/24. This additional funding was utilised with the following purchases and supporting resources procured:

- 8 solar powered compacting litter bins for high traffic areas, compaction helps avoid overflow
- 150 dual purpose litter and recycling bins
- 6 electric pedestrian controlled sweepers
- One additional graffiti removal crew for part of the year
- Additional street cleaning waste and fly-tip removals from flats above shops at locations remote from town centres and main roads

Town Centre Cleaning

1.9 The cleaning arrangements for town centres are as follows:

- Permanent presence from cleaning operatives providing a dedicated Town Centre service of sweeping, litter picking and blue bag removals.
- Increased frequency litter bin emptying
- Pro-active graffiti removal
- Pavement and pedestrianised area jet washing

1.10 At town centre locations there are daily street cleaning arrangements in place for at least the morning shift and, in many town centres, for the afternoon shift as well. The town centre cleaning arrangements include the cleaning of the first 25 metres of adjoining residential roads to keep control of any litter fallout from the town centre.

1.11 Table 2 below shows the levels of cleanliness recorded in town centre locations for the year prior to the Covid pandemic and for the last two years.

Table 2 – Town Centre cleanliness 2019/20, 2022/23 & 2023/24

YEAR	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Flyposting
2019-20	86.8%	95.8%	89.3%	90.4%
2022-23	93%	98.4%	72.4%	94.6%
2023-24	94%	97.5%	81.7%	90.4%
Target	93%	90%	95%	97%

1.12 Again, the scores shown in green are where the targets have been met and those shown in pink are where the targets were not met. The information in Table 2 shows that in Town Centres good standards of cleanliness are being maintained for both Litter and Detritus. However, the standards of cleanliness for both Graffiti and Flyposting are below target.

Frequency of cleaning in roads off main roads

1.13 Other than in town centre locations where there are daily street cleaning arrangements in place, streets are only given a full broom and shovel clean once every 5 weeks. This provides for removal of built up detritus, leaves and litter. This cleaning process is supported by litter picking on a more regular basis to deal with litter and dog fouling. The frequency of litter picking off main roads is undertaken in accordance with assessment and experience of the need, which could be between six times per week and twice per week.

Graffiti

- 1.14 Based on current and historical performance the main area of concern for street cleanliness, as measured using the NI195 methodology, is the level of graffiti, which has risen gradually in the period since 2018-19. The target is for 95% of streets to be at a high or acceptable level of cleanliness for graffiti, whereas current performance is just under 90%.
- 1.15 Note that the measurement of levels of graffiti includes all graffiti that is visible in the public realm from anywhere on a cleanliness survey transect including;
- on council buildings and infrastructure
 - on private property and infrastructure
 - at high level on any property and infrastructure including railway lines and bridges
 - in a neighbouring borough

Current arrangements for graffiti removal

- 1.16 The removal of graffiti from council buildings and public street furniture is undertaken through the in-house Cleaning Service. There are seven graffiti removal teams covering the whole of the borough, including Housing estates. Each team is made up of two members of staff using a van and a towable compressor unit which is used to provide high-pressure washing to remove graffiti. Graffiti removal teams also use a range of graffiti removal products which are used where surfaces would be damaged by the use of high-pressure washing. Graffiti removal teams are responsible for a number of other cleaning activities, for example fly-poster removal, pavement washing and street furniture cleaning.
- 1.17 Graffiti removal teams carry out their work based on a combination of reactive works, in response to reports received by the council to the Call Centre or through the use of Fix-my-street, and also proactive works where known graffiti hotspots are regularly visited and cleared whether or not reports have been received for them.
- 1.18 As part of the Streets for People programme, additional funding has been made available to address the level of graffiti in Southwark during 2023/24. An extra graffiti removal team was procured externally through a competitive tender process and worked in the borough from September 2023. The effectiveness of the external graffiti removal team was limited and the arrangement was brought to an end in January 2024. Following this, the remaining Street for People funding that has been made available to address the level of graffiti is being used procure stock of graffiti coatings that will be applied at graffiti hotspot locations to make it easier and quicker to remove repeat graffiti.
- 1.19 The target for speed of removal of reported graffiti is 98% within 24 hours of report for graffiti on council buildings and public street furniture that the council is responsible for. This target is being consistently met and performance is reported through the Council Delivery Plan.
- 1.20 In October 2023 a change in policy was implemented to provide removal of graffiti on private property up to a height of 2 metres without charge provided a disclaimer is signed by the property owner. This has helped to increase the ability of the in-house service to remove more of the graffiti in the public realm. On-going issues with graffiti in the public realm can be summarised as follows:

- Private property and infrastructure owners who are unwilling to sign disclaimers allowing the council to remove graffiti up to a height of 2 metres on their property
- Transport bodies that do not prioritise graffiti removal from their infrastructure, eg TfL response time for removing graffiti reported on bus stops is 28 days
- Transport bodies that are unable to remove graffiti due to health and safety risks and disruption to services that would be caused from closing lines to allow works
- Repeat graffiti at hotspot locations
- High level of graffiti on property and infrastructure under all types of ownership

Fly-tipping

- 1.21 The type of fly-tipping that occurs in Southwark can be summarised as follows:
- Household waste in sacks fly-tipped onto streets by residents of flats above shops
 - Household waste in sacks fly-tipped on estates by residents, most often where there are not adequate waste facilities available
 - Bulky household waste fly-tipped by residents onto streets and estates
 - Commercial waste in sacks fly-tipped onto streets by businesses based in the borough
 - Commercial waste, sacks and bulky, fly-tipped into communal household waste containers or elsewhere on estates.
- 1.22 The council has the following arrangements in place to deal with removal and enforcement of fly-tipping:
- Daily street cleaning by in-house Cleaning Service to remove fly-tipped waste, from both flats above shops and businesses
 - Regular estate cleaning by in-house Cleaning Service to remove waste fly-tipped on estates by residents and businesses
 - Letters sent to residents to explain household waste collection arrangements
 - 'Duty of Care' notices served on businesses by Environmental Enforcement Team requiring proof of commercial waste collection arrangements
 - Some collaborative working across services to clear up fly-tip hotspots where joint actions are required (Waste, Cleaning, Enforcement, Wardens, CCTV, Housing)
- 1.23 The Cleaning Service removes fly-tipping proactively from town centres, main roads, estates and hotspots as part of the deployment of scheduled services, and at the same time removes fly-tipping reactively in response to reports received from the public via the available reporting channels. Fly-tipping at other locations is removed reactively in response to reports received from the public via the available reporting channels. The Council Delivery Plan includes a key performance indicator for the speed of removal of reported fly-tips. The target for removal of reported fly-tips is 98% within 24 hours of receipt of report and performance for this indicator is consistently met.
- 1.24 Fly-tipping enforcement is undertaken by the Environmental Enforcement Team which sits within Regulatory Services. The team consists of 9 FTE. This also includes an officer part funded by the Better Bankside business improvement district (BID).
- 1.25 The purpose of the team is to reduce and eliminate environmental crime, which includes addressing other issues such as graffiti, repairing vehicles on the highway, fly

posting, free printed material distribution and littering. Due to the high frequency of fly-tipping in Southwark, the team prioritises a significant amount of its resources towards tackling this particular problem.

- 1.26 To achieve sustainable outcomes and a comprehensive problem-solving approach, the team collaborates with various services across the Council, Tenant Resident Association, Police, Better Bankside (BID), We are Waterloo (BID), Network Rail, as well as local residents and businesses. By using an educational and enforcement strategy, the team's primary aim is to change behaviours and discourage fly-tipping as well as other enviro-crime.
- 1.27 The team support the council's corporate aims by creating a healthy environment through cleaner greener safer spaces. They do this by reducing illegally deposited waste which would otherwise increase operational costs incurred by waste cleansing teams. They ensure business meet their obligations in relation to waste management by ensuring proper waste management processes are in place.
- 1.28 The team operates a service between 0600hrs and 2200hrs, Monday to Friday responding to complaints and carrying out targeted inspections across the borough. Over the weekend officers are available on an overtime basis to carry out targeted interventions based on service intelligence and need.
- 1.29 Table 3 below provides details of the number of waste and litter enforcement service requests and enforcement actions taken in 2022/23 and in 2023/24 to February 2024.

Table 3 - Waste and litter enforcement service requests and enforcement actions

Financial year	2022 – 2023	2023-2024 (to Feb 24)
Total number of service requests received	1794	1489
Number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for Waste	675	533
Number of Section 34 Notices issued	428	334
Number of Prosecutions	0	0
Income from FPNs:		£46,810

- 1.30 The team are currently building on the existing intelligence operating model to broaden their approach, working more holistically to achieve common goals across regulatory services and other teams such as cleansing.

Waste

- 1.31 Other areas of focus that affect cleanliness in the borough include the following:
- Waste on estates
 - Waste Collection arrangements at locations with flats above shops

Waste on estates

- 1.32 Waste on estates can be an issue for various reasons including the following:

- Missed waste collections – often due to lack of access, eg due to parked cars.
- Insufficient container capacity for the volumes of waste produced – especially recycling bins.
- Use of estate containers for disposal of household waste from residents not living on the estate or for disposal of commercial waste.
- Contamination of recycling containers which cannot be emptied by recycling collection crews
- Broken/inadequate/unsafe chute systems (storey level and chute chambers), including chutes that are too small to fit bags into, leading to residents leaving waste in stairwells and next to chute hoppers.
- Waste container theft - roughly 40 skip type containers have been stolen in the last few years, and around 200 metal communal. These are all from council estates where bins are more easily stolen due to lack of security.
- Insufficient storage capacity for residual and/or recycling waste containers leading to residents having to fill bins to overflowing point, and then put bagged waste on the floor.
- Waste containers being stored in the open - this both attracts vermin, and increases thefts risks, and can also attract abuse such as fly-tipping on estates.
- Residents leaving waste at storey level, or making no attempt to use working chute systems, or not simply placing waste in available containers provided.
- Bulky waste fly-tipping – this is habitual on most estates
- Poor original estate design – including pedestrianised estates with no vehicular access for collections, resulting in bins being stored on the edge of estates where they are often misused by non- residents
- Challenges in providing space and storage for recycling containers in old blocks that were only designed for storage and collection of a single stream ie. residual waste.

1.33 The council has the following arrangements in place to deal with issues with waste on estates:

- Missed waste collections monitored and managed through Veolia Waste PFI contract
- Some successful work between Housing and Waste Management to implement better waste storage facilities where there is HRA funding available, eg. Metrostor bin housing units on Brandon Estate
- Annual waste service leaflets to all residents to explain general residual and recycling waste collection and storage principles
- Some targeted waste service communications is provided to residents on estates to explain their specific residual, recycling and bulky waste collection arrangements
- Some enforcement against fly-tipping on estates where evidence is available

Waste Collection arrangements at locations with flats above shops

1.34 The council has introduced timed waste collections at two locations in Southwark to help control the times when waste is left out for collection and when it is collected, these are at Walworth Road and Rye Lane. Timed collections apply to the shops and the flats above shops in the areas where they operate. Residents or businesses that place waste out for collection outside of the designated times are liable to enforcement action with fixed penalty notices currently at £400.

- 1.35 The council provides the timed collection service for household waste in these locations, along with businesses that use the council's commercial waste collection service. For businesses that do not use the council's waste collection service, they are held accountable for any of their waste that is not collected by their collection provider in compliance with the timed collection requirements. The timed collection arrangements in Walworth Road and Rye Lanes currently work reasonably well in controlling waste on streets. Note that in timed collection locations the use of the pavement to store household or commercial waste bins is not permitted.
- 1.36 At other locations where there are shops and flats above shops, there are no controls over the times when waste is left out for collection but there are controls over the days when waste is left out for collection. These controls are as follows:
- Household waste from flats above shops is only authorised to be left out for collection on one day per week in accordance with the published Veolia household waste collection schedule
 - Commercial waste from businesses is only authorised to be left out for collection on the days when it has been agreed with their commercial waste collection contractor for it to be collected
- 1.37 Enforcement against household and commercial waste can be undertaken where waste is left out for collection on the wrong days in locations that do not have timed collections. However, even with a good enforcement regime in place it is possible that such locations are rarely or never completely free of waste. The solution to this would be to expand the use of timed collections to more locations in the borough. Whilst this is possible, there are a number of matters that must be taken account of:
- Creation and implementation of timed collections requires significant human and operational resource that is currently not budgeted for
 - Implementation of timed collection requires consultation with all stakeholders, including households and businesses in the relevant location. This would include collecting responses aimed at understanding what days and/or times of day would be preferred by those affected.
 - Experience has shown that it is impossible to gain a 100% consensus on the days and/or times that should apply.
 - The council's in-house Cleaning Service provides the operational resources that are required to service timed collections. There would be significant challenges in providing an expanded network of timed collections within the current street cleaning operation in terms of vehicle numbers and the requirement that they would have to collect at specific places at specific days/times.
 - Veolia only provide once per week collection of household waste from flats above shops and they do not operate to specific collection times for any of the household waste collection operations. Therefore, it is unlikely that Veolia would be able to assist with any timed collection scheme.

2. How can we use resources better to address waste and cleaning issues

2.1 The four areas for improvement that have been identified, and therefore where the focus should be on using resources better, are as follows:

- Town Centre Cleanliness
- Graffiti
- Fly-tipping
- Waste on estate and

Town Centre Cleanliness

2.2 Table 4 below sets out some potential actions for improving the cleanliness of Town Centres, along with the pros and cons that should be considered for these potential actions.

Table 4 – potential actions to improve cleanliness in town centres

Potential Action	Pros	Cons
Outsource litter enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High impact • Demonstrates willingness to take tough measures • Self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perception - seen as a way to raise income rather than to solve a problem? • Impact on residents with low income • Approx. 12 month lead in time
More timed collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a framework to manage when waste is put out & when it is collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires resource inputs to set up and operate. • Approx. 12 month lead-in time
Increase/prioritise enforcement of trade waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalises trade waste fly-tipping • Reduces trade waste fly-tipping which saves money • Short lead-in time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less resource for enforcement of other environmental crimes, eg. graffiti and fly-tipping
Hard sell of council commercial waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to increase income • Potential to reduce fly-tipping • Short lead-in time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot force businesses to use council service. • Does not solve issue of different collectors at different times
Increased frequency of sweeping at expense of residential streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better cleanliness standards in town centres for more of the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for cleanliness standards in residential roads to decline.

Graffiti

2.3 Table 5 below sets out some potential actions to reduce levels of graffiti, along with the pros and cons that should be considered for these potential actions.

Table 5 – potential actions to improve graffiti cleanliness standards

Potential Action	Pros	Cons
More collaborative working across services (Cleaning, Enforcement, Wardens, CCTV) and with Police to apprehend and deter offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catching and prosecuting offenders could act as a deterrent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource intensive with no guarantee of successful outcomes Less resource to dedicate to other enviro crime, eg. fly-tipping, town centres
Communication and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of graffiti as anti-social behaviour and of the council's work to remove graffiti More engagement with property owners to seek wider use of disclaimers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetrators unlikely to change behaviour as a result of this work Engagement for disclaimers currently undertaken by Street Cleaning Supervisors. Redirection of resources from other work is required to facilitate more engagement
Use of murals to discourage graffiti at hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murals can enhance amenity in places where graffiti currently impacts amenity Murals may deter graffiti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited application, not every graffiti hotspot is suitable for a mural Requires allocation of funding No guarantee of deterring graffiti
Use of graffiti walls to give an outlet for graffiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to control where graffiti is applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetrators unlikely to change behaviour as a result of this work Places for graffiti walls is limited Requires resource to manage and operate

2.4 The increase in the level of graffiti in the borough has already been recognised as a matter of concern. This problem cannot be resolved purely through the deployment of more resources to remove graffiti. A Graffiti Hot Spot Action Plan is being developed to address the issue. This will include a range of actions taken collaboratively across council services, by seeking support from the Police and external stakeholders.

Fly-tipping

2.5 Table 6 below sets out some potential actions for reducing flytipping, along with the pros and cons that should be considered for these potential actions.

Table 6 – potential actions to improve reduce fly-tipping

Potential Action	Pros	Cons
More collaborative working across services (Waste, Cleaning, CCTV Wardens, Enforcement) to catch and deter offenders at fly-tip hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This type of approach has had some positive results previously • Prosecuting offenders could act as a deterrent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource intensive which means less resource to dedicate to other environmental crime, eg. graffiti and town centres
Communication campaign to include: General information Specific information CCTV videos of fly-tippers Publicise successful prosecutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise general awareness of fly-tip as a criminal offence, signpost information on website for correct procedures • More detailed communications at specific fly-tip hotspots • Publicise CCTV fly-tip videos and seek information • Publicise successful prosecutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None specific
Design out fly-tip hotspots, eg. by installing planters or benches, or by opening up hidden spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourages fly-tipping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires project management resource & funding for physical infrastructure (potential to use CGS funding for this purpose)
Bulky waste collection points on estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise bulky waste collection points on estates requiring no booking or fee payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed messages with bulky waste charged service

Waste on Estates

- 2.6 Table 7 below sets out some potential actions for improving the management of waste and increasing recycling on estates, along with the pros and cons that should be considered for these potential actions.

Table 7 – potential action to improve cleanliness and increase recycling on estate

Potential Action	Pros	Cons
Investment and repair of waste storage and management infrastructure on estates (Project established to review this)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide sufficient, easy to use and safe waste facilities and waste containers that residents will automatically use in the correct way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRA funding primarily needed. Some repairs and investment are costly (but can be off-set by revenue savings for Cleaning costs saved) Building and/or space limitations, remedies for some blocks are difficult even if funding is available
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater use of waste service communications to explain block-specific residual, recycling and bulky waste collection arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None specific
Audit of recycling and residual waste bins and collection frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure sufficient storage and collection capacity is in place for both waste streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building and/or space limitations may hinder provision of the number of bins required

- 2.7 The issues with waste on estates has already been identified as an area that must be addressed. To this end officers from the Waste Management Service, Cleaning Service and Housing are working to produce specific action plans to address issues with waste on seven specific estates where the issues are most acute. This work is currently in the early stages.

Themes for using resources better

- 2.8 Looking at the potential actions for improving cleanliness and increasing recycling in the borough, the common themes across the different areas set out above are as follows:
- Direction of existing resources to where they are needed the most, for example; reduce street cleaning frequency in some residential roads and increase street cleaning frequency in Town Centres; focus Environmental Enforcement resources on the issues and the locations that are most in need of improvement; reduce refuse collection resources where they are underused and deploy those resources into increased recycling collection capacity
 - Consider provision of environmental enforcement by external organisation on a cost-neutral basis to increase the enforcement profile in the borough, in particular to address litter and fly-tipping

- Greater use of communication and engagement to address poor behaviours such as littering and fly-posting, and to increase good behaviours such as participation in recycling. Consider the use of concerted and regular and long standing public campaigns with recognised straplines to promote these messages and use of council fleet to carry messages.

Waste & Cleaning Service

Waste & Cleaning Overview and Scrutiny Using our resources better

7 May 2024

Background

- Street Cleaning current budget - £10.24m
- Savings from Street Cleaning base budget in recent years;
 - 2019/20 - £510k
 - 2021/22 - £390k
 - 2023/24 - £500k (One off investment of £500k)
- No savings are due to be taken in 2024/25
- Service efficiencies through digital and resource review in 2024/25

Current Performance

LEQ (Streets)	Performance 2023/24	Target	Comments
Litter	93.4%	93.0%	On target. Broadly in line with historic performance levels
Detritus	93.5%	90%	On target. Broadly in line with historic performance levels
Graffiti	88.3%	95%	Below target. Performance has deteriorated in the last 4 years
Flyposting	97.3%	97%	On target. Broadly in line with historic performance levels
Estates	Performance 2023/24	Target	Comments
Cleanliness at SLA standard	99%	90%	On target. Broadly in line with historic performance levels

The LEQ table above provides street cleanliness performance for 2023/24 for the four measured Local Environmental Quality indices (LEQs). The estates table above shows cleanliness performance for 2023/24.

Areas of focus

- Town Centres
- Proactive and reactive Graffiti management
- Fly tipping
- Waste on estates

Town Centre Challenges

- High levels of graffiti and flyposting
- Potential for high litter levels to extend into side streets
- Flats above shops, lack of waste storage, resulting in waste left out more frequently
- Commercial waste fly-tipping

Town Centre Interventions

- Town Centre cleaning extends into the first 25 metres of side streets
- Timed waste collections in Walworth Road and Rye Lane
- Daily street cleaning to remove fly-tipped waste, from both flats above shops and businesses
- Environmental Enforcement Team visits to businesses to check waste 'Duty of Care' compliance and enforcement of fly-tipped waste
- New dual purpose litter bins (150) to be installed and electric pedestrian sweepers to be deployed
- Monitoring and supervision of town centre cleanliness increased

Town Centre Suggestions

Suggestion	Pros	Cons
Outsource litter enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High impact • Demonstrates willingness to take tough measures • Self financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perception - seen as a way to raise income rather than to solve a problem? • Impact on residents with low income • Approx. 12 month lead in time
More timed collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a framework to manage when waste is put out & when it is collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires resource inputs to set up and operate. • Approx. 12 month lead-in time
Increase/prioritise enforcement of trade waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalises trade waste fly-tipping • Reduces trade waste fly-tipping which saves money • Short lead-in time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less resource for enforcement of other environmental crimes, eg. graffiti and fly-tipping
Hard sell of council commercial waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to increase income • Potential to reduce fly-tipping • Short lead-in time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot force businesses to use council service. • Does not solve issue of different collectors at different times.
Increased frequency of sweeping at expense of residential streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better cleanliness standards in town centres for more of the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for cleanliness standards in residential roads to decline.

Graffiti Challenges

- Levels of graffiti in Southwark (and London) increased in recent years
- Target of 95% of streets at high or acceptable levels of cleanliness for graffiti is not being met – this includes all visible graffiti
- Private property owners not inclined to remove graffiti
- Graffiti on transport infrastructure removal is either not a priority for responsible parties, or removal has health and safety challenges
- High level graffiti removal is complex and costly – whoever is responsible
- Rapid re-graffiti of hotspot areas after graffiti removal
- Difficult to catch offenders and graffiti is not a priority for Police

Graffiti Interventions

- Seven graffiti removal teams deployed in the borough covering estates and streets
- Graffiti removed proactively from known hotspots on a regular basis
- Graffiti removed within 24 hours at other locations in response to reports from the public
- Use of disclaimers and free removal service for graffiti removal from private property
- Limited collaborative working across services and with Police to catch offenders
- Limited high level graffiti removal
- Use of graffiti coatings to make removal quicker and easier

Graffiti Suggestions

Suggestion	Pros	Cons
More collaborative working across services (Cleaning, Enforcement, Wardens, CCTV) and with Police to apprehend and deter offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catching and prosecuting offenders could act as a deterrent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource intensive with no guarantee of successful outcomes Less resource to dedicate to other enviro crime, eg. fly-tipping, town centres
Communication and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of graffiti as anti-social behaviour and of the council's work to remove graffiti More engagement with property owners to seek wider use of disclaimers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetrators unlikely to change behaviour as a result of this work Engagement for disclaimers currently undertaken by Street Cleaning Supervisors. Redirection of resources from other work is required to facilitate more engagement
Use of murals to discourage graffiti at hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murals can enhance amenity in places where graffiti currently impacts amenity Murals may deter graffiti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited application, not every graffiti hotspot is suitable for a mural Requires allocation of funding No guarantee of deterring graffiti
Use of graffiti walls to give an outlet for graffiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to control where graffiti is applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetrators unlikely to change behaviour as a result of this work Places for graffiti walls is limited Requires resource to manage and operate

Fly tip Challenges

- Household waste in sacks fly-tipped onto streets by residents of flats above shops
- Household waste in sacks fly-tipped on estates by residents, most often where there are not adequate waste facilities available
- Bulky household waste fly-tipped by residents onto streets and estates
- Commercial waste in sacks fly-tipped onto streets by businesses based in the borough
- Commercial waste, sacks and bulky, fly-tipped into communal household waste containers or elsewhere on estates.

Fly tip Interventions

- Daily street cleaning by in-house Cleaning Service to remove fly-tipped waste, from both flats above shops and businesses
- Regular estate cleaning by in-house Cleaning Service to remove waste fly-tipped on estates by residents and businesses
- Letters sent to residents to explain household waste collection arrangements
- 'Duty of Care' notices served on businesses by Environmental Enforcement Team requiring proof of commercial waste collection arrangements
- Some collaborative working across services to clear up fly-tip hotspots where joint actions are required (Waste, Cleaning, Enforcement, Wardens, CCTV, Housing)

Fly-tip Suggestions

Suggestion	Pros	Cons
More collaborative working across services (Waste, Cleaning, CCTV Wardens, Enforcement) to catch and deter offenders at fly-tip hotspots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This type of approach has had some positive results previously • Prosecuting offenders could act as a deterrent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource intensive which means less resource to dedicate to other environmental crime, eg. graffiti and town centres
<p>Communication campaign to include:</p> <p>General information Specific information CCTV videos of fly-tippers Publicise successful prosecutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise general awareness of fly-tip as a criminal offence, signpost information on website for correct procedures • More detailed communications at specific fly-tip hotspots • Publicise CCTV fly-tip videos and seek information • Publicise successful prosecutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None specific
Design out fly-tip hotspots, eg. by installing planters or benches, or by opening up hidden spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourages fly-tipping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires project management resource & funding for physical infrastructure (potential to use CGS funding for this purpose)
Bulky waste collection points on estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise bulky waste collection points on estates requiring no booking or fee payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed messages with bulky waste charged service

Estate Waste Challenges

- Challenges in providing space and storage for containers due to estate design
- Insufficient storage and container capacity for the volumes of waste produced
- Waste containers being stored in the open, resulting in misuse and contamination
- Missed waste collections – often due to lack of access
- Broken/inadequate/unsafe chute systems and unsafe bin rooms
- Residents leaving waste at storey level
- Bulky waste fly-tipping

Estate Waste Interventions

- Missed waste collections monitored and managed through Veolia Waste PFI contract
- Some successful work between Housing and Waste Management to implement better waste storage facilities where there is HRA funding available, eg. Metrostor bin housing units on Brandon Estate
- Annual waste service leaflets to all residents to explain general residual and recycling waste collection and storage principles
- Some targeted waste service communications is provided to residents on estates to explain their specific residual, recycling and bulky waste collection arrangements
- Some enforcement against fly-tipping on estates where evidence is available

Estate Waste Suggestions

Suggestion	Pros	Cons
<p>Investment and repair of waste storage and management infrastructure on estates (Project established to review this) 7 initial estates identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide sufficient, easy to use and safe waste facilities and waste containers that residents will automatically use in the correct way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRA funding primarily needed. Some repairs and investment are costly (but can be off-set by revenue savings for Cleaning costs saved) Building and/or space limitations, remedies for some blocks are difficult even if funding is available
<p>Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater use of waste service communications to explain block-specific residual, recycling and bulky waste collection arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None specific
<p>Audit of recycling and residual waste bins and collection frequency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure sufficient storage and collection capacity is in place for both waste streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building and/or space limitations may hinder provision of the number of bins required

Using resources better

- Direction of existing resources to where they are needed the most.
- Consider provision of environmental enforcement by external organisation on a cost-neutral basis
- Greater use of communication and engagement to address poor behaviours and increase promote good behaviours

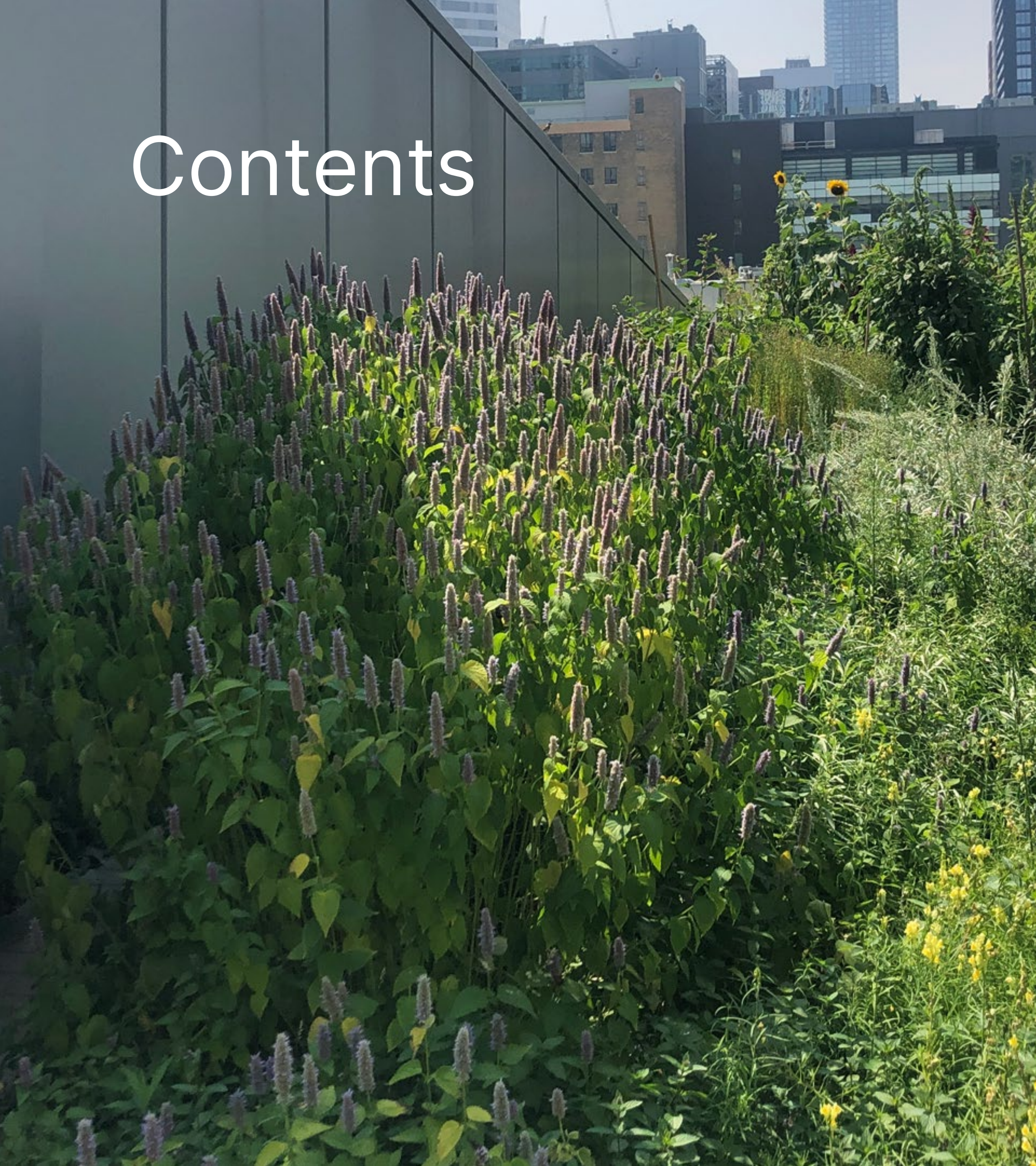
Growing Cities

The urban agricultural revolution



Leanne Werner

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A close-up photograph of several green leaves, likely from a plant, showing significant damage from insect feeding. The leaves are vibrant green with prominent veins. Numerous small, irregular holes and larger, jagged tears are visible across the leaf surfaces, indicating that insects have been eating the foliage. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a garden or field setting.

Urban agriculture incorporates a range of activities involved in growing, processing and distributing food within cities and towns. It can include practices such as animal husbandry, aquaculture, beekeeping and horticulture.

This report specifically focuses on the growing of fruit, vegetables and companion plants that help increase biodiversity.

Urban agriculture has the potential to transform how we live in cities and towns. Done in the right way it can improve our relationship with the local environment, how and what we eat, how we use spaces and even our relationship with each another.

Why is urban agriculture more important than ever?

Our food system is under pressure, with overuse of chemicals, monocultures and depleted soil in the countryside. One in six species are at risk of extinction. According to the [State of Nature report](#) since 1970 UK species have declined by about 19% on average, and nearly 1 in 6 species (16.1%) are now threatened with extinction. The way we manage our land for farming and climate change are some of the biggest causes of wildlife decline in the UK and that is why a shift to more wildlife-friendly farming is urgently needed.

The UK imports 44% of its vegetables and close to 84% of its fruit ([The United Kingdom market potential for fresh fruit and vegetables | CBI](#)). The IPCC warns that a global temperature rise above 1.5°C will result in climate-related risks to food security and increased mortality from disease and conflict from food scarcity. Creating more growing spaces in cities can help take the pressure off rural land and reduce carbon emissions associated with 'food miles'.

What are the benefits of urban agriculture?

At an environmental level, growing locally can provide enormous benefits for wildlife, air quality, water quality, flood mitigation and biodiversity. It can increase our food security and lead to healthy dietary shifts, providing public health benefits. Food growing projects can also increase meaningful interactions amongst residents, leading to better community relationships and improved nutritional and better mental health.

Why urban agriculture in North America?

Over an eight-week period I visited a wide range of food growing projects in cities across Canada and the US that are leading the way in urban agriculture. On my travels I was continuously reminded that we are facing a climate and ecological catastrophe, no more so than when my train through the Rockies to Vancouver was cancelled because of raging wildfires in the Northwest Territories. A Yellowknife resident in Calgary told me she was an environmental refugee, evacuated along with 20,000 others. The whole city had been forced to leave, including doctors, nurses and teachers. Just imagine if the whole of London had to be evacuated because of flooding.

Urban agriculture is not a silver bullet that can solve the whole climate and ecological crisis, but it has the potential to play an important part. It can help us reconnect with nature, decrease our carbon footprint, increase biodiversity and improve our health, wellbeing and sense of security.

My research

I wanted to develop a comprehensive and systematic understanding of urban food production by looking at:

- Innovative local food growing by-laws, policies and systems that can help shape local environmental and food growing policies in London.
- Suitable urban spaces for growing.
- Best practices in sustainable food production, particularly in ensuring urban food farming increases biodiversity.
- Systems ensuring that urban farming is inclusive and equitable.
- The role of civil society and how food growing can be more inclusive.

UK: our backyard

Before diving into the deep and colourful tapestry of urban agriculture in North America, the following section looks at what the UK is doing to facilitate and increase urban agriculture at a national and local level, as well as how non-profit organisations are pushing for change in this area.

National level

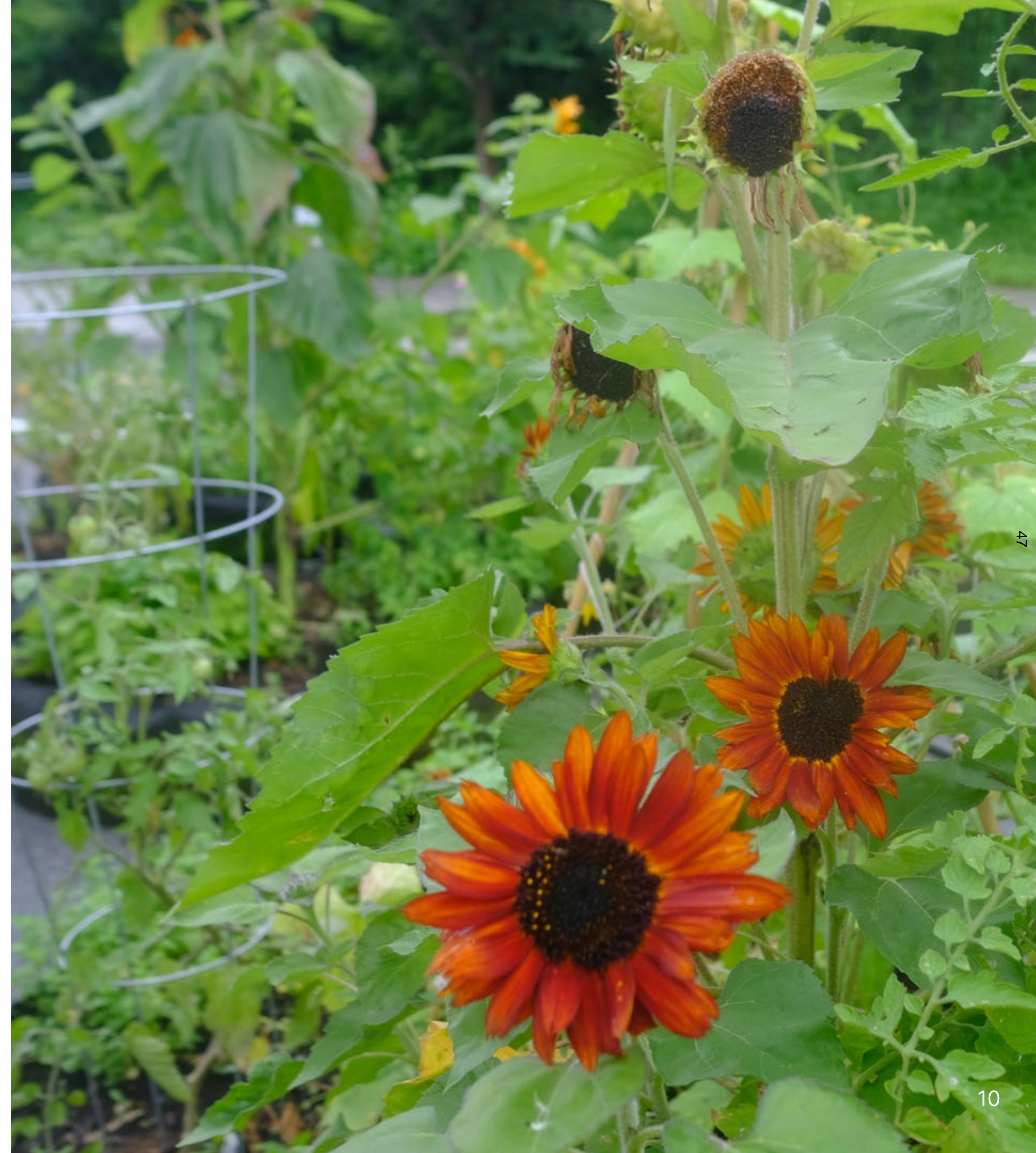
[Biodiversity Net Gain](#)

Biodiversity Net Gain means developers must now deliver a biodiversity net gain of 10% on any new development. All projects consider factors like water usage, pesticide use and land management practices to ensure they have a positive impact on biodiversity. Increasing urban agriculture can be an effective way to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain in London by creating green spaces, supporting native species, improving soil health and raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity conservation.

[The Environment Act 2021](#) is a piece of legislation passed by the UK Parliament, aiming to address environmental protection and improvement. There are provisions in the Act to enhance biodiversity conservation and restoration efforts. It includes measures to protect and restore natural habitats, improve wildlife conservation and promote green infrastructure. There is no dedicated legislation for urban agriculture and the role it can play in increasing biodiversity in cities.

Greater London Authority level

[The GLA's London Food Strategy](#) was updated November 23 and details how the Mayor of London has incorporated a policy to promote food



growing in the [New London Plan](#). This is set under Policy G8 Food Growing and encourages all London boroughs to:

- Protect existing allotments and encourage space for urban agriculture, this includes community gardening and food growing within new developments and vacant and underutilised land.
- Identify sites for food growing.

Overall, the Mayor encourages growing more locally, using sustainable methods that will benefit all communities.

The Mayor endorses the [Capital Growth Network](#), London's most extensive network dedicated to food cultivation. Through this network, individuals cultivating their own food in London receive various forms of support, including discounted access to training, networking opportunities, assistance with commercial growing endeavours and discounted equipment purchases.

At London Borough Level

Local Authority Southwark case study

[Southwark Council](#)

Southwark Council has fully committed to urban food growing and has two Community Gardening Coordinators who work with groups of residents to help plan, build and coordinate growing spaces on LBS land.

Through the [Allotment Expansion Guarantee](#) the Council is committed to creating more opportunities for community gardening and food growing.

There are now more than 200 new growing plots on Southwark Council housing estates, with more in development. There are 17 new gardens

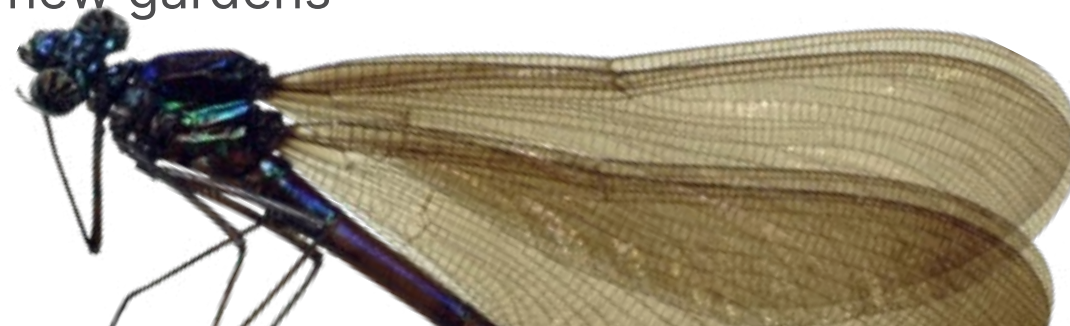
across the borough, from [Rouel Road](#) in Bermondsey in the north to Melford Court in East Dulwich.

[Right to Food](#) The London Borough of Southwark declared itself as a Right to Food Borough, working with local businesses, community groups and schools to ensure everyone in Southwark has access to healthy, affordable food within a short walk of their home. The designation of a 'Right to Food Borough' signifies a commitment by Southwark to prioritise food security and equity as essential elements of their governance agenda. It involves collaboration with community organisations, businesses and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing food-related challenges and promoting a more sustainable and equitable food system within the borough.

[Southwark Nature Action Plan 2020](#) The Southwark Nature Action Plan 2020 (SNAP) currently identifies the strategic priorities for biodiversity and sets out actions to protect and enhance biodiversity in Southwark. There is no mention of food growing and how it can increase biodiversity, however in the updated Southwark Nature Action Plan & Tree Planting Progress (dated 27/06/23) some of the actions include developing a community garden plan which includes a new right for residents to have a community garden or food growing plots on their estates.

Climate Change and the natural environment are key priority areas in the council's adopted [Southwark's Climate Change Strategy](#), where they commit to a 'Thriving Natural Environment' in the borough. This commitment includes improving biodiversity, introducing new green corridors and making streets a green place to walk, play and relax. The Action Plan for the strategy includes an action to increase food growing in the borough, expanding allotments and community gardening.

There is also a plan to update planning policy for food retail to prioritise areas in the borough identified as food deserts. To put this into context,



it is estimated 75,000 of Southwark's residents are food insecure, meaning they struggle to buy food, have to skip meals or cut down on eating.

In July 2019 London became the first [National Park City](#), making London a National Park. This provides a framework to promote investment in London's natural capital and green infrastructure. One of the seven action areas of the National Park includes locally grown food and responsible consumption. Southwark Council has committed to work together with stakeholders to contribute to the charter for the London National Park City.

[Southwark's Land Commission](#) states 'one of the most inclusive and democratic ways in which Southwark can enable a just and more equitable environmental and ecological transition is to change its approach to land. At a time of an intense cost-of living crisis, there is a clear need and opportunity for environmentally focused land use and management decisions to help meet social and ecological objectives.' They use [Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model](#) as an example to be resourced and replicated to enhance food security for Southwark's diverse communities.

[Southwark Plan 2022](#) The plan states that development must contribute to net gains in biodiversity through, 'enhancing the nature conservation value of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), designated ancient woodland, populations of protected species and priority habitats/species identified in the United Kingdom, London or identified and monitored in the latest adopted Southwark Nature Action Plan; and protecting and avoiding damage to SINCs, LNRs, populations of protected species and priority habitats/species; and Including features such as green and brown roofs, green walls, soft landscaping, nest boxes, habitat restoration and expansion, improved green links and buffering of existing habitats. Any shortfall in net gains in biodiversity must be secured off site through planning obligations or as a financial contribution.'

Opportunities

[Our Vision – Old Kent Road](#)

In the plan for the regeneration of Old Kent Road there are plans for three new parks (increasing new green space by eight hectares), and the creation of new green links and spaces between these parks. There is potential to create growing spaces on each new roof top development as well as including spaces to grow within the new parks and green corridors.

UK organisations leading the way in urban growing

[Incredible Edible](#)

Incredible Edible transforms neglected urban spaces into vibrant, productive landscapes filled with edible plants. They encourage local residents to participate in gardening and learn about sustainable food production. By cultivating fruits, vegetables, herbs and other edible crops in public areas, projects not only increase access to fresh, nutritious food but also promote social interaction, community building and environmental sustainability. These initiatives beautify urban areas, foster ownership and pride, and contribute to overall well-being and resilience of communities.

Their [Right to Grow Campaign](#) requires local authorities to maintain a free, accessible map of all public land that is suitable for community cultivation or wildlife projects. They also aim to make it straightforward for community groups to secure free leases to cultivate the land, and allow those groups to bid for the land should the authority decide to sell it.

'Bigger, better, more joined up incredible edibles' refers to the idea of expanding and improving community-based initiatives focused on growing and sharing edible plants. This concept emphasises the importance of increasing the scale and impact of projects like Incredible Edible, which

promote urban agriculture, food sustainability and community cohesion. By connecting and integrating these initiatives on a larger scale, communities can enhance resilience, food security and environmental sustainability while fostering a sense of responsibility and cooperation.

Summary

At the national level, the [Environment Act 2021](#) addresses environmental protection but lacks dedicated legislation for urban agriculture. Initiatives like Biodiversity Net Gain emphasise the importance of green spaces in cities for biodiversity, but there is no major emphasis on the role urban agriculture can play in increasing biodiversity.

At the Greater London Authority level, the Mayor of London's Food Strategy incorporates policies to promote food growing, with a focus on protecting existing allotments and creating new growing spaces.

At the local level, Southwark Council exemplifies commitment to urban agriculture through initiatives like Community Gardening Coordinators, the Allotment Expansion Guarantee and the designation of Southwark as a Right to Food Borough.

Southwark's efforts are aligned with broader strategies such as the Southwark Nature Action Plan, Climate Change Strategy and the London National Park City initiative, all of which recognise the importance of urban agriculture in enhancing biodiversity, addressing food insecurity and promoting environmental sustainability.

Additionally, grassroots organisations like Incredible Edible play a significant role in transforming urban spaces into productive landscapes, fostering community engagement, and promoting sustainable food production practices. The concept of 'Right to Grow' emphasises the importance of ensuring access to public land for community cultivation.



US/Canada policies

My research focuses on cities in North America, as they have similar climates, demographics and social challenges to London but are pioneers in urban agriculture. The cities I selected to visit are leading in urban food growing.

For example, Toronto's bylaw makes it mandatory for new buildings to have green roofs; Montreal has the world's largest rooftop farm; Detroit's agrihoods are making urban food growing more inclusive; Vancouver has a long history of supporting and facilitating urban agriculture and the city incorporates urban agriculture into its planning and development processes; and Portland is home to a wide range of food growing projects and an organisation that is getting communities to depave vacant land themselves.

This report covers groundbreaking policies and strategies to increase urban agriculture in US cities; the multitude of spaces available and used to grow food; how urban agriculture plays an important role in increasing biodiversity in cities; how growing locally creates a deeper sense of community and security and is a form of political power; finally there are a list of recommendations on how the UK can embrace the urban agricultural revolution.

Having the right support from local government can make a significant difference in the success and longevity of local food growing projects. Here are some of the innovative ways that city councils in North America are helping residents become more self-sufficient, informed and motivated to grow local:

Green Roof Bylaws [Toronto](#)

In 2009 Toronto became the first city in North America with a bylaw that requires green roofs and establishes construction standards for them. More specifically, if a new building is more than 2000 square metres then it has to have a green section: if developers don't or can't install a green roof they have to pay \$200 per square metre. Any resident or organisation can apply for funding to support the installation of green roofs and cool roofs on Toronto homes and buildings (green roofs use soil and vegetation as living insulation, while cool roofs reflect solar energy: both reduce building energy use for heating and/or cooling).

[Toronto's green roof bylaw](#) defines a green roof as an extension of an above grade roof, built on top of a human-made structure, which allows vegetation to be planted in a growing medium and which is designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the Toronto Green Roof Construction Standard. A green roof assembly includes, as a minimum, a root repellent system, a drainage system, a filtering layer, a growing medium (soil) and plants, and it is installed on a waterproof membrane of an applicable roof. Green roof systems are most often installed on a flat roof but can be installed on a sloped roof with a few additional considerations. [Green roof systems](#) are generally classified as extensive, semi-intensive or intensive.

[Detroit's land database](#)

Detroit's Land Based Project Team was established in 2018 to help give residents more direction on the land available and what is permitted. If people want to use a particular plot of land, they can purchase the side lot next to their home. If they want a lot in another area, a project plan is needed. A land-based project is defined as land for urban agriculture, gardening, beautification and other productive uses, whether for profit or as a community-based activity.

Eligible vacant lots must share a property line with a residential property they own. The house must be occupied, and the side lot must be 7,500 square feet or less to qualify.

Residents have the option of purchasing land at market rate (20 cents per square foot) so around \$500/600 (around £393/£467) for 3,000 square feet.

On [Detroit City's website](#) you see what land is free and look at a plot you might be interested in buying.

It is an easy-to-use map and lets people see development opportunities in Detroit. You can click on any area of the city, and it tells you who owns the land, the zone, council district, the last sale date, last sale price, parcel number, taxable status and total acreage.

It has only been a decade since farming was legalised in Detroit, despite residents farming in the city's backyards and abandoned lots since the 1970s, when then-mayor Coleman Young started the Farm-A-Lot



programme which subsidised urban farming on vacant land within city limits. There is pressure from developers, especially in mid-town and the west village, for land to be used for buildings instead of urban agriculture. The east has the most land available but sits on a floodplain. Detroit takes growing seriously, and the mayor's office are looking to recruit a Director of Urban Agriculture.

[Vancouver's Greenest City Action Plan](#)

Vancouver has been thinking green for longer than most cities. Its Greenest City Action Plan set out specific targets and actions to become the greenest city in the world by 2020. The plan included strategies to promote urban agriculture, increasing the number of community gardens, expanding urban farming opportunities and supporting local food production.

Here are some the action plan's key initiatives:

The creation of a Food Policy Council that advises the city government on food-related issues and helps shape policies to promote a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system. The council collaborates with various stakeholders, including community organisations, farmers, businesses and residents, to develop and implement initiatives that support urban agriculture and food security.

Integration of Agriculture into Urban Planning: Vancouver incorporates urban agriculture into its planning and development processes to ensure that food production is integrated into the fabric of the city. This involves incorporating green spaces, food-producing landscapes, and agricultural infrastructure into urban design and development projects.

Local Food Procurement Policy: Vancouver has adopted a local food procurement policy that prioritises the purchase of locally grown and

produced food for city-run facilities, events and programmes. By supporting local farmers and producers, the city aims to strengthen the regional food system and reduce its environmental footprint.

Green Infrastructure Strategy: Vancouver's Green Infrastructure Strategy incorporates urban agriculture as a component of green infrastructure planning. The strategy aims to enhance the city's resilience to climate change, improve biodiversity and promote sustainable land use practices, including the integration of food-producing landscapes into urban environments.

Urban Farming Incentives: Vancouver offers incentives and support for urban farming initiatives, such as tax breaks, grants and low-cost lease agreements for city-owned land. These incentives help reduce barriers to entry for urban farmers and encourage the expansion of local food production within the city.

In Vancouver, developers discovered that turning their vacant lots into community gardens while they waited for the next project to be ready could save them hundreds of thousands of dollars in city taxes. Putting a garden on a commercially zoned site allows it to be reclassified as a public park or garden, resulting in an 80% tax saving.

Planning (known as zoning) amendments in Montreal

Zoning amendments in Montreal support and facilitate urban agriculture projects by providing clear guidelines and regulations that accommodate agricultural activities within the urban landscape. Here is how zoning amendments can help urban agriculture projects in Montreal:

Designating Agricultural Zones: Zoning amendments can designate specific areas within the city as agricultural zones where urban agriculture activities are permitted or even encouraged. These zones may include

vacant lots, under-utilised spaces or areas with suitable soil and sunlight conditions for food production. By designating agricultural zones, Montreal creates dedicated spaces for community gardens, urban farms, and other agricultural projects.

Flexible Land Use Regulations: Zoning amendments can introduce flexibility into land use regulations to accommodate diverse forms of urban agriculture. This involves a mix of residential, commercial and agricultural uses within certain zones, enabling property owners to engage in gardening or small-scale farming activities while still complying with zoning regulations. Flexible land use regulations accommodate innovative farming techniques, such as vertical farming, aquaponics and rooftop gardens.

Setbacks and Building Height Restrictions: Zoning amendments address setbacks from the road and building height restrictions to ensure that urban agriculture projects can effectively utilise available space. For example, setbacks from property lines and building height restrictions may be adjusted to allow for the construction of greenhouses or other structures used in agricultural production. By modifying these regulations, Montreal can maximize the use of land for food production while maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses.

Land Subdivision and Lot Consolidation: Zoning amendments can streamline the process of land subdivision and lot consolidation to create larger parcels of land suitable for urban agriculture projects. This may involve relaxing subdivision requirements or providing incentives for property owners to combine adjacent lots into larger plots for farming or gardening purposes. By facilitating land consolidation, Montreal can address the challenge of fragmented land ownership and make it easier for urban farmers to access the land they need to scale up their operations.

Public Engagement and Consultation: Zoning amendments should be developed through a transparent and participatory process that involves

input from stakeholders, community members and experts in urban agriculture. Montreal can engage with residents, community organisations, and other stakeholders to gather feedback on proposed zoning changes and ensure that they reflect the needs and priorities of the local community. By incorporating public input into the zoning amendment process, the city can foster greater support for urban agriculture initiatives and promote inclusive and sustainable development.



A mini guide to urban spaces

- Community gardens – shared spaces where individuals or groups can rent or volunteer to cultivate fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers collectively.
- Rooftop gardens and farms – an excellent way to utilise the space on top of buildings for growing food. They can range from small-scale container gardens to larger, more complex systems.
- Urban farms – larger-scale operations located. They can take different forms and be located on vacant lots, rooftops, or repurposed industrial spaces.
- Educational institutions – schools, colleges and universities incorporate gardens into their campuses to educate students about food production, nutrition, and environmental stewardship.
- Edible landscapes – edible landscapes integrate food-producing plants into public or private landscaping designs and replace ornamental plants with edible varieties, such as fruit trees, berry bushes and edible perennials.
- Allotments – individual plots rented by residents for growing food.
- Vertical farms – involves growing crops indoors in stacked layers or vertically inclined surfaces. Vertical farms often utilise hydroponic or aeroponic systems for efficient water and nutrient management.

Space to grow

Land in most cities is hotly contested and it often seems impossible to find suitable land for growing, especially with pressure to build more housing. However with a little imagination, persistence, and the right support there are endless places to grow food including: gardens, balconies, rooftops, schools, colleges, universities, libraries, office spaces and vacant spaces (basically any public or private space that is not being used!). Here are some examples:

[University roofs in Toronto](#)

Benefiting from Toronto's green roof bylaw, Toronto Metropolitan University has two rooftop farms on campus that produce and distribute food, facilitate research and engage the community through ecological rooftop farming and food justice initiatives. The roof-top farm supplies around 2,500kg of food per year from its market garden section, producing around 100 different types of fruit and vegetable from April to October. The roof is a hotbed of research, with a number of PhD students currently looking at [capturing storm water](#) and recirculating water in drainage. They also have an apprentice market gardener programme, training gardeners of the future.

A Sixth Form College in Toronto

[FoodShare](#) is a food justice organisation based in Toronto and one of their main projects is a three-acre organic farm on the site of Burmhampton High School, a further education college that specialises in hairdressing and engineering. The farm was conceived in 2010: it is about showing young people where food comes from and how to grow fruit and veg. It grows enough food to feed the local community and beyond.

A Boxing Club in Detroit

Detroit Boxing Club (DBG) stands in a community where literacy challenges have been stark. Since they set up in 2007 they have achieved a 100% high school graduation rate over 15 years. In Spring 2023, their vision blossomed further with the launch of DBG Garden. It has become a community-focused haven led by gardener Shaquana Suggs. She comments, 'it is a testament to growth – of fruits, vegetables, and young aspirations. Our produce not only nourishes bodies but also fuels our innovative cooking classes, making farm-to-table concepts tangible for the youth. Coupled with our on-site chicken coup, we're painting a vivid picture of sustainable living. As they say DBG Garden is more than earth and water; it's a reaffirmation of DBG's dedication to holistic education, underscoring the pivotal role of gardening and self-sustenance. From this land, we're not just sowing crops, but dreams and possibilities for Detroit's emerging leaders.'

[Laboratoire agriculture urbaine \(AU/LAB\)](#)

Eric Duchemin – president of AU/LAB, an environmental scientist and now a world leader in urban agriculture. AU/LAB is a non-profit and encourages the emergence of initiatives relating to the production, processing, distribution and marketing of urban agriculture. The ultimate aim is to develop a fully sustainable food system and a circular economy. Since it was set up in 2009, its team has been supporting and encouraging innovation in urban agriculture by working with many organisations around the city. Here Eric describes his vision: [VIDEO](#)

One of their green roof spaces is located on Palais des Congrès de Montréal. The aim of the space is to help reduce urban heat island effect and improve air quality, and encourage industry and property owners to green their rooftops. The space currently serves multiple purposes, including as a growing area used by refugees: it offers some respite from



the settling-in phase, and the opportunity to grow their home vegetables. There are vines growing grapes that will be turned into wine, and a wildflower bed brimming with life which is open all hours for the local honeybees. The space is fully circular reusing rainwater.

A school in Vancouver

[Fresh Roots](#) was founded in 2009 to create educational opportunities and food production initiatives that engage youth and community members in growing healthy food in urban environments. Alexa Pitoulis, Fresh Roots' Executive Director, explained how they are the first organisation in Canada to create urban farms in schools and their educational programme is integrated into the curriculum of local schools. She believes everyone should have access to healthy food land and community. Their hands-on learning programme reaches over 5,000 kids each year. They grow around 280 different crop varieties and sell their produce through veggie subscriptions and farmers markets.

Here Fresh Roots Executive Director Alexa Pitoulis explains more about their work at Vancouver Technical School: [VIDEO](#)

Gardens in Vancouver

[City Beet Farm](#) was founded in 2013 with the aim of transforming under-utilised urban spaces into productive organic vegetable gardens. The farm primarily operates in residential back gardens, using people's private spaces to grow a variety of vegetables, herbs and flowers. City Beet Farm help to install the garden, maintain it, and they run workshops to help residents convert their yards into productive food gardens. Liana and Duncan own and run the organisation. They explained how they sell their produce using a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, whereby a farmer or a group of farmers partner with individuals from the local area who make an investment in the farm in advance of a growing season and

become members of the CSA. In this growing season there are four people in total tending to 14 yards that together make up half an acre – and feed 71 households in total.

Liana and Duncan who own and run City Beat Farm outline their project:

[VIDEO](#)

Hydroponic rooftop farm in Montreal

[Lufa Farms](#) was founded in 2009 by Mohamed Hage and his wife Lauren Rathmell – their ambition was to reinvent the food system. Since then, they have set up four farms around Montreal, the last one being pegged as the world’s largest commercial urban rooftop farm. It spans 160,000 square feet (the size of three football fields) and grows around 20,000 greens at any one time. Using a hydroponic system – they use peat moss and coconut husk to grow micro greens: fruits and water rather than soil is used to provide nutrition. Lufa sell directly to consumers and work with smaller farmers around the Montréal area. The green roof I visited has two temperature zones and is primarily heated by residual heat from the building below. Unfortunately, this kind of farm is extremely expensive to set up and a [recent article in the Guardian](#) details how many vertical and indoor farms are struggling with increasing energy costs.

[An edible walkway in Montreal](#)

Montreal has the largest edible pedestrian street in Canada. It was set up in 2022 in the Ste-Marie district of the city. Beccah Frasier, Codirectrice Générale, explained how Promenade des Saveurs has 1620 ft² of cultivable area; more than 500 kg of vegetables and fruits are produced and distributed to the community. During the growing season about 150 smart pots filled with over 80 species of edible plants. These pots hold a soil depth of 20cm which is enough to support a good yield of almost every vegetable and herb. Benefits of smart pots include good aeration, water

drainage and heat release, and they have drip irrigation system. Some 75% of the vegetables are harvested by passers-by.

Making spaces

De-paving in Portland

By depaving areas in urban environments, there is potential to create space for urban agriculture initiatives such as community gardens, rooftop gardens or food forests. These spaces can be used for growing fruits, vegetables, herbs, and other edible plants, providing local residents with access to fresh and nutritious produce.

[Depave](#) in Portland is an initiative aimed at removing unnecessary pavement from urban areas and replacing it with green spaces or permeable surfaces. They reclaim spaces by holding public events for the community such as art exhibitions and music concerts. I met Katherine Rose, Communications and Engagement Coordinator at one of their [Park\(ing\) Days](#). They were celebrating Parking Day by occupying a parking spot at the future 7th and Sandy Green Plaza site and displaying project design boards and creating a temporary parklike space. Art Heaux, a BIPOC-led art collective, occupied the onsite storage container/popup gallery space. These actions give the community a chance to reimagine how the space can be used and provide an incentive for them to help with the actual de-paving.

Here Ted Labbe - co-director of Depave – explains more about the project:

[VIDEO](#)



Biodiversity

If done in the right way, urban farming can lead to an increase in biodiversity. Plant diversity in urban agricultural sites is consistently higher than other forms of green space (Lin & Fuller, 2013; Taylor & Lovell, 2013). Being mindful of how the earth is used and what is planted can lead to an increase in pollinators and therefore an increase in overall food production.

FoodShare's Burmhampton High School

Burmhampton High School has a three-acre site divided into three areas: one acre for food, one acre for pollinators and the rest an orchard. Surprisingly it was only started in 2019: it felt and looked like it had always been there. The site is next to a busy road, and when the growers started farming, they had to improve the soil with organic matter as it is very heavy clay. They have done a brilliant job of bringing life to this site which now nurtures hundreds of pollinators.

Most of the plants and vegetables are grown from seeds or plug plants. There are 65–75 different crops and the type of crop grown is decided by the community. Each vegetable patch is divided by pollinators. It is a fully organic farm, and they use landscape fabric over cabbages to deter pests instead of using harmful pesticides.

Toronto Metropolitan University

The roof is divided into various sections including a sacred medicine wheel-shaped planting area where they grow sage, tobacco and sweet grass to name just a few. They often get party crashers on roof spaces – otherwise known as volunteer plants – that just appear. They don't remove the plants, as they thrive on this rooftop environment.

The roof-top farm produces around 2,500kg of food per year from its market garden section, with around 100 different types of fruit and vegetable from April to October. The farm is fully organic, and they use crop rotation and a drip irrigation system.

City Beet Farm

City Beet Farm follows organic and sustainable farming practices, focusing on soil health, biodiversity and community engagement. They help to install a garden, maintain it, and they run workshops to help residents convert their yards into productive food gardens. Through their efforts, City Beet Farm not only contribute to local food production but also promotes urban greening, biodiversity and neighborhood resilience.

[Farmers on 57th](#)

Farmers on 57th is an urban farming initiative located in Vancouver. It operates on the grounds of the George Pearson Centre, and all residents are in wheelchairs and have complex care needs. Residents were keen to get back to growing as many had gardens in the past. Karen Ageson ran the urban farm, and also co-founded the Vancouver Urban Farming Society which does a lot of urban agriculture advocacy in the city. The farm produces a wide range of vegetables, herbs and flowers using organic and sustainable farming methods. Members of the CSA programme typically receive a weekly share of the harvest throughout the growing season, providing them with a direct connection to locally grown, seasonal produce. They run Horticulture therapy workshops and residents have wheelchair accessible raised beds. They can make their own smoothies: this helps people on straw diets. Farmers on 57th plays an important role in promoting urban agriculture, biodiversity and community resilience in Vancouver. Farmers on the 57th Karen Ageson explains more about the farm: [VIDEO](#)

Food sovereignty

[Food sovereignty](#) was defined at the Forum for Food Sovereignty held in Nyéléni, Mali, in February 2007 as, 'the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.'

[La Vía Campesina](#) is an umbrella movement bringing together organisations, small producers, landless people, indigenous people and rural workers from many different parts of the world. It was one of the main organisations promoting the framework of food sovereignty – with its seven principles. Recognising and honouring the cultural diversity within urban communities is essential for inclusive urban farming. This involves incorporating culturally relevant crops, traditional farming practices and community celebrations into urban agriculture projects.

Black and Indigenous food sovereignty

One of Toronto Metropolitan University's growing projects is on top of the Daphne Cockell Building that hosts the city's newest urban roof-top farm, home to the [Black Food Sovereignty Alliance Programme](#). Nicole Austen leads the Black-centric programme development of the farm: she first became interested in growing when she started studying nutrition at the university in 2016.

Nicole Austen explains more about the programme: [VIDEO](#)

Nicole has been developing the [Harvest Collective and Learning Circle](#), piloted by the Black staff and community network at Toronto Metropolitan University. It is a community supported agricultural model: for 10 Canadian

The seven pillars of food sovereignty

- Focuses on food for people: The primary purpose of food production and distribution should be to meet the nutritional needs and ensure the food security of people, rather than prioritising profits or export markets.
- Values food providers: Food sovereignty values and supports the rights and livelihoods of small-scale food producers, including family farmers, peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk and indigenous peoples. It recognises their knowledge, skills, and contributions to food production.
- Localises food systems: Food sovereignty promotes decentralised food systems that prioritise local production, distribution, and consumption. It encourages communities to rely on locally adapted agricultural practices and traditional knowledge.
- Puts control locally: It advocates for democratic control over food systems, allowing communities and individuals to make decisions about food production and consumption that align with their needs, preferences, and cultural traditions.
- Builds knowledge and skills: Food sovereignty emphasises the importance of agroecological farming practices and traditional knowledge in building resilient and sustainable food systems. It promotes education and capacity-building to empower communities to produce their own food.
- Works with nature: It promotes environmentally sustainable agricultural practices that respect the ecological limits of the planet, conserve biodiversity, and mitigate climate change. Agroecology is a central component of food sovereignty, emphasising the integration of ecological principles into farming systems.
- Values food as culture and tradition: Food sovereignty recognises the cultural significance of food and the importance of preserving traditional foodways and culinary traditions. It seeks to protect food diversity and promote culturally appropriate diets.

dollars a week people can help harvest food and take it home. The second strand is a learning circle (the space itself) where this year they have grown a dozen culturally significant crops for the African diaspora including okra, garden egg, kalou and cerasee.

Nicole is clear that to help people understand what Black food sovereignty is it was important to create a framework, so she designed four key pillars of the programme: food literacy, food and social justice, environmental stewardship and community healing. All aspects are Black-led, Black-mandated and Black-serving.

The Urban Farm strives to support the health and well-being of the community and surrounding ecosystem by using practices that are ecologically, socially and financially just. This includes growing foods, medicines and plants that are culturally significant to communities by applying diverse knowledges, foodways and growing techniques.

Food distribution

Equitable distribution of food in urban areas involves addressing food deserts – neighborhoods with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. Strategies to combat food deserts include establishing community gardens, farmers' markets, mobile food markets and partnerships with local grocery stores to increase access to fresh produce.

Toronto Metropolitan University's roof-top farm produces around 2,500kg of food per year from its market garden section, with around 100 different types of fruit and vegetable from April to October. The farm is fully organic, and they use crop rotation and a drip irrigation system. They have a very equitable model for distributing the produce: a third is donated, a third is sold to students at a subsidised rate, and a third is sold at market rate. The donated food goes to beneficial organisations including the Native Women Services, Good Food services and outreach work in the city's food deserts.



Seed Library

[Village Vancouver](#) is a grassroots organisation based in Vancouver and run by Ross Moster. They are focused on building sustainable and resilient communities through various initiatives related to urban agriculture, food security, and community engagement. One of their key programmes for improving food security is running 26 seed libraries in several neighbourhoods around Vancouver. They also run seed saving workshops, convene seed saver clubs, hold seed packet parties, make seed donations to community and school gardens and other seed libraries, and support efforts to increase seed sovereignty.

Local ownership of food production/commons

Prominent historian Peter Linebaugh emphasises the importance of reclaiming and defending common resources, including land and food, from enclosure and privatisation. His analysis of historical struggles for the commons, such as the English peasant uprisings and the enclosures of common lands, sheds light on the connections between land use, property rights, and social justice.

In the context of urban agriculture, Linebaugh's ideas may relate to efforts to reclaim vacant lots, public spaces and rooftops for community gardens and food production. His emphasis on collective action, solidarity and grassroots resistance can inform strategies for organising and advocating for urban agriculture initiatives that promote food sovereignty, community self-reliance and environmental sustainability.

Detroit's agrihoods: food is power

In Detroit, historically marginalised groups have been working hard to mitigate against climate change. Community gardens are seen as political power. 'In Detroit, a lot of gardeners do it for political reasons – it's a slap in

the face of agri-business, and a way to control their own food security,' says Monica White, a sociology professor at Wayne State University' (p187, The Urban Revolution, Peter Ladner).

Sitopia (food sacred)

Sitopia is a term coined by British author and philosopher Carolyn Steel in her book Sitopia: How Food Can Save the World. It is a portmanteau of the Greek words 'sitos,' meaning food, and 'topos,' meaning place or site. In essence, sitopia refers to the idea of 'food place' or 'food site.' Steel uses sitopia to explore the profound connections between food and place, and how these connections shape human societies, cultures and landscapes. She argues that food is not only a physical necessity but also a powerful force that influences how we organize our cities, communities, and lives.

In Sitopia, Steel advocates for a more mindful and sustainable approach to food production, distribution and consumption. She calls for reimagining our food systems to prioritize local, seasonal and culturally appropriate foods, and to foster a deeper appreciation for the connections between food, nature and human well-being.

The concept of sitopia encompasses the idea of food as sacred, highlighting the reverence and respect that many cultures have traditionally held for food and the natural world. By embracing sitopia, Steel suggests that we can create healthier, more equitable and more sustainable food systems that nourish both people and the planet.

A recent study by Michigan State University estimated that with the use of green houses, trained farmers, proper storage and bio-intensive techniques, in just 570 of Detroit's vacant 5,000 acres of city land 70% of the city's vegetables and 40% of its fruit could be produced. Researchers looking at Detroit estimated that if 20% of fresh food purchased came from local sources, more than 4,700 jobs would be created, along with \$20 million in tax revenues (p103, The Urban Revolution, Peter Ladner).

The University of Michigan is doing a study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on how different types of vacant lot reuse can cut firearm violence in Detroit. Examples include community gardens, pocket parks and green infrastructure. The study is looking at how more community engagement boosts the preventive effects of vacant lot reuse on firearm incidents. They are using site surveys and in-depth case studies of effective reuse strategies. The [study](#) is called "Firearm violence prevention through community-engaged vacant property reuse: Application of Busy Streets Theory in Detroit." It's by the Institute for Firearm Injury Prevention at the University of Michigan. They say, "A lot of evidence suggests that fixing up vacant lots is a good way to cut violent crime and firearm assaults."

[Keep Growing Detroit](#)

Arriving in Detroit on the weekend of Keep Growing Detroit's (KGD) 26th annual bike tour of Detroit farms and gardens was a highlight of my trip. They have a 1.38-acre site in the heart of the Historic Eastern Market District. KGD is a mecca for all things green in the city. Their mission is to promote a food sovereign city; advocating for most fruits and vegetables eaten by Detroiters should be grown by residents within the city. They do this through their many educational programmes. These include the Garden Resource Program. It supports a network of over 2,000 urban gardens and farms in the city. They also run Grown in Detroit helping city

growers sell their fruits and vegetables they grow at local markets. The barriers to entry are low.

Their inclusive urban farming can create economic opportunities for local residents, including job training, employment and entrepreneurship in food-related industries. By providing pathways to economic empowerment, urban farming initiatives contribute to community resilience and self-sufficiency.

What follows is a list of the farms I toured in Detroit, part of the KGD network:

Black Dog Berries

William (Bill) Albrecht started Black Dog Berries in 2018, buying four lots on Fischer St. A grant from Selma Cafe and a gift from Bandhu Gardens helped him to plant 18 trees and hundreds of berry bushes. The vision is to create wealth for the neighbourhood in the form of food security and produce that can be sold. They are planning to host educational experiences for kids and adults. KGD have already held a pruning fruit tree workshop at the plot, and Bill and his family are a real part of the community. During his tour, he greeted a young boy chasing an old-fashioned ice-cream van and joked with him about preferring ice-cream to gardening. They were going to fence the garden but, after talking to a Libyan neighbour who had fond memories of open growing spaces, they decided to leave it. They harvested a lot of berries this summer, including four types of raspberries.

Gateway Community Gardens

Gateway Community Garden in the east of the city is on a floodplain. The garden was set up and is run by the very brilliant Pastor Glenda Fields. Pastor Fields has been providing food for families and a safe space for children since 2018. Gateway Community Gardens works with local organisations and churches. They serve the families of this neighborhood and beyond. The ground is contaminated so they have 13 raised beds filled with various vegetables and flowers. During the summer, Gateway Community Garden also hosts the Meet Up & Eat Up programme and it provides meals to children during summer breaks.





Pastor Glenda Fields explains more about her community garden: [VIDEO](#)

Fairer food prices

[Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#) (DBCFSN), co-founded by Malik Kenyatta Yakini, operates a seven-acre urban farm and is spearheading the opening of the Detroit Food Commons, a cooperative grocery store and community hub in Detroit's North End. It is aimed at addressing food insecurity and promoting local economic development. The project was envisioned to be a worker-owned cooperative, providing healthy food options, supporting local farmers and food producers and offering educational programmes and community events. Yakini views the work of DBCFSN as part of the larger movement for building power, self-determination and justice. He has an intense interest in contributing to the development of an international food sovereignty movement that embraces Black communities in the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa.

[Carrefour Solidaire](#)

In Montreal, Carrefour Solidaire is an organisation that 'cultivates a healthy community and social justice through the power of food.' It grows food at a number of locations in the city and all the food harvested goes back into the community. Carrefour Solidaire's [community kitchen](#) and shop has a system where people who shop at there can pay three different prices depending on their circumstances; after analysing their takings over a period of time the amount of money they make evens out.

FoodShare in Toronto has a similar model and sell their produce at the farmers market at a lower than market value. They are trying to shift the model, and growing and selling to the community they directly serve helps to reduce the price. They sell culturally appropriate produce that is accessible for everyone. Their vision – that everyone can feed themselves and their loved ones – is clearly in action.



Conclusion

Urban farming stands as a beacon of hope amidst the challenges faced by our modern food systems and cities. Through initiatives like the ones explored in Detroit, Toronto, Vancouver, Portland and Montreal, urban farming showcases its transformative power on multiple fronts.

Living in cities we can often feel removed from nature and where our food comes from. Urban farming redefines our relationship with food, fostering a deeper connection between consumers and their sustenance while promoting healthier, more sustainable dietary habits. By reclaiming under-utilised spaces and integrating agriculture into the urban landscape, cities can significantly reduce their reliance on distant food sources, thereby mitigating environmental pressures and lowering carbon emissions associated with transportation.

Moreover, urban farming emerges as a catalyst for community empowerment and social cohesion. Projects such as Detroit's Black Community Food Security Network exemplify how marginalized communities can reclaim control over their food supply, fostering economic opportunities, and promoting self-sufficiency.

Innovative policies and initiatives, as demonstrated by Toronto's green roof bylaws and Vancouver's Greenest City Action Plan, provide crucial support for the growth of urban farming endeavors. By leveraging public resources and engaging stakeholders, cities can create an enabling environment for sustainable food production while enhancing both biodiversity and ecological resilience.

However, challenges persist, including the need for equitable access to resources and opportunities within the urban farming landscape. Efforts to

address food deserts and ensure fair distribution of produce underscore the importance of inclusivity and social justice in shaping urban agricultural initiatives.

Ultimately, the journey towards a more food-secure, resilient and equitable urban future relies on our collective commitment to harnessing the potential of urban farming. By embracing innovation, collaboration, and community-driven approaches, cities can cultivate thriving ecosystems of urban agriculture that nourish both people and the planet. As we continue to navigate the complexities of urbanisation and food security, urban farming stands as a beacon of resilience, offering a path towards a more sustainable and vibrant urban existence.



Recommendations

National level recommendations:

- Develop specific legislation that helps to increase urban agriculture as a way of tackling the ecological emergency.
- Amend the Environment Act 2021 with specific goals on improving and protecting the environment through urban agriculture.
- Highlight how urban agriculture can contribute to biodiversity net gain by creating green spaces, and support native species in the [Biodiversity Net Gain](#) guidance.
- Increase funding for research and innovation in agriculture, food production and environmental sustainability. Target this more at urban agriculture, including supporting research projects and pilot initiatives related to urban food production and sustainable agriculture practices.

Local government recommendations:

- Provide financial incentives for residents and businesses to grow food, especially on roof spaces and underutilised spaces.
- Create an interactive land map showing spaces available for food growing projects, similar to the [Land Based Register](#) in Detroit.
- Create a multi-stakeholder Food Policy Council that can help shape policies to promote a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system.
- Rethink local Food Procurement Policy that prioritises the purchase of locally grown food for city-run facilities, events and programmes.

- Local government should strategically plan and promote agricultural development on vacant land to strengthen regional resilience and provide ecosystem services.
- Showcase on an interactive webpage the variety of different spaces that can be used for food growing.
- Through planning legislation offer incentives to create urban rooftop farms and growing spaces on new sites.
- In collaboration with tech firms create an audit of rooftops in London that are suitable for urban food growing.
- Create a London wide urban agricultural strategy.

Southwark Council specific recommendations:

- Monitor and measure how food growing projects in Southwark are increasing biodiversity and helping to tackle the ecological emergency.
- Look at piloting a cooperative grocery store and community hub in collaboration with food growing projects in the area (using an equitable economic model).
- Create new food growing zones alongside new developments (roof tops, schools and new parks and green land). Old Kent Road would be a good test site for an integrated and inclusive food growing system.
- Update the SNAP, including development of a community garden plan, which includes the right for residents to have a garden or food growing plots on their estate to ensure integration, plus include detail on how Southwark can support urban agriculture to increase biodiversity.
- Include urban food growing targets in the Southwark Plan.

Credits

Firstly, thank you to Churchill Fellowship for this life-changing experience. I would also like to thank the following people for sharing their knowledge and taking the time out of their busy schedules.

Montreal

[Laboratoire agriculture urbaine](#), Eric Duchemin, Directeur Scientifique

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[Lufa Farms](#)

[La Centrale Agricole](#) LN Saint-Jacques, Director

Toronto

[City of Toronto](#) Emma Tamlin, Engagement Manager at Green Roofs for Healthy Cities and Co-chair of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

[Toronto Metropolitan University](#) Sharene Shafie, Research Coordinator at the Urban Farm; Nicole Austen, Black-centric Programme Lead

[FoodShare](#) Orlando Martin Lopez Gomez, Community Food Growing Senior Manager; Sarina Martins, Garden Assistant

Detroit

[City of Detroit](#) Sara Elbohy, Planner, East Region

[Keep Growing Detroit's](#) 26th annual bike tour of Detroit farms & gardens

[Keep Growing Detroit](#) Joyce Dallas, Volunteer

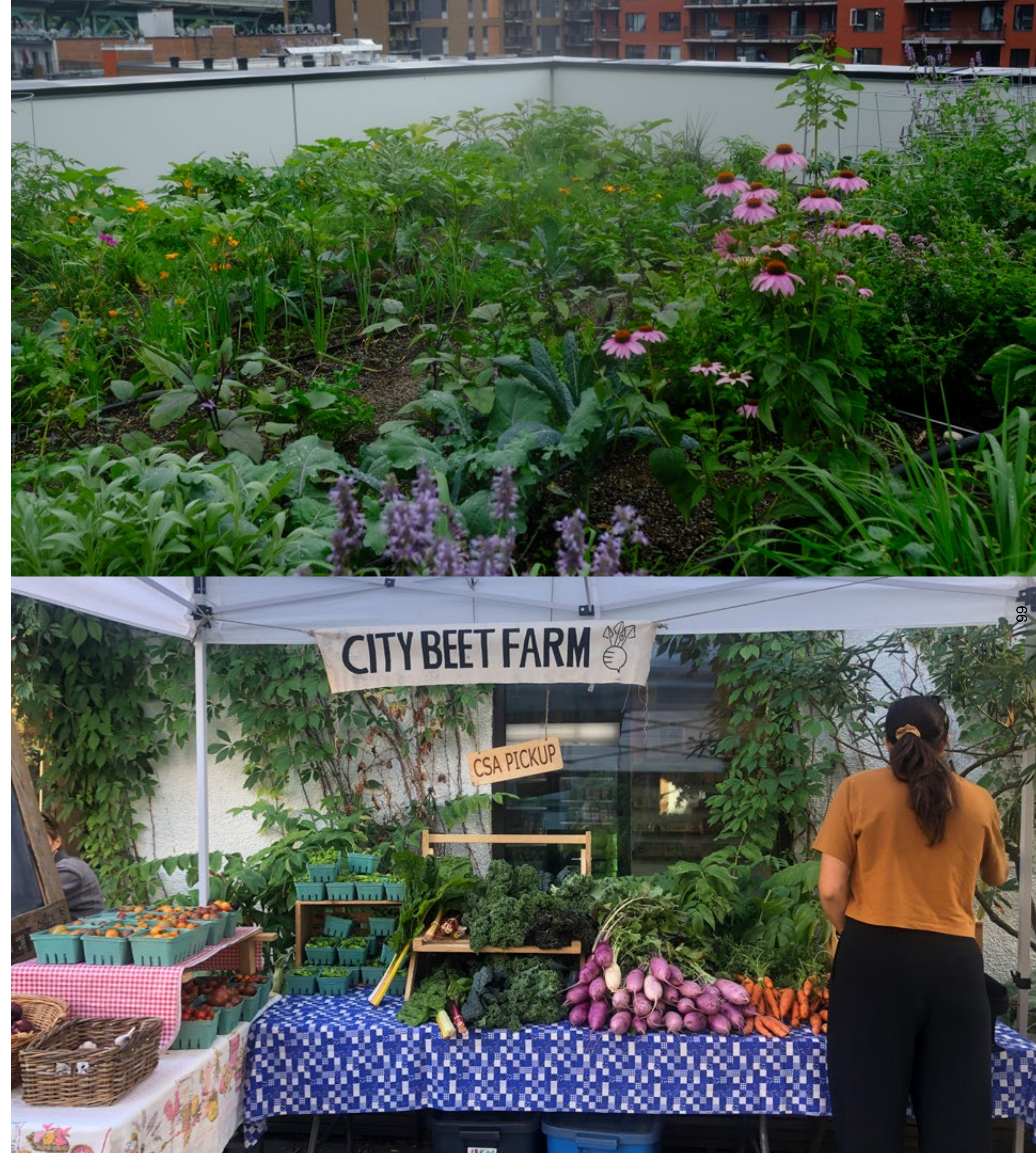
Black Dog Berries Farm, William (Bill) Albrecht

Wonder Farm, Lindsay and Myles Hamby

Gateway Community Garden, Pastor Glenda Fields

[Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#) Malik Kenyatta Yakini,

Co-Founder and Executive Director



Vancouver

[Village Vancouver](#) Ross Moster

[Farmers on 57th](#) Karen Ageson, Co-Founder of the Vancouver Urban Farming Society

[Fresh Roots](#) Alexa Pitoulis, Executive Director

[City Beet Farm](#) Liana & Duncan, owners and farmers

Patrick Moore, a Canadian industry consultant, former activist, an early member and past president of Greenpeace Canada

Peter Ladner, Former Vancouver councillor. Urban Food Revolution author

[The University of British Columbia](#) Peter Wood, Lecturer and Coordinator

Calgary

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[HighField Farm](#) Heather Ramshaw, Operations Manager

Portland

[Outgrowing Hunger](#) Adam Kohl, Executive Director

[The Side Yard Farm & Kitchen](#), Stacey Givens and Hazel

[Depave](#) Katherine Rose, Communications and Engagement Coordinator; Ted Labbe, Co Director; Shawn Perez, President

Last but not least: Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party of Canada, and her husband John Kidder. I met them on my long train journey across Canada and not only did they give me valuable insights about green policies in the country – they sang me happy birthday.

Saeida Rouass encouraged me to apply for a Churchill Fellowship and Helena Smith held the fort and designed and edited this report.

Image credits

p1–2: Keep Growing Detroit's urban farm. Image: Leanne Werner

p3: View from Toronto Metropolitan University's urban rooftop farm.

Image: Leanne Werner

p4–6: Leaf. Image: Mikita Yo

p10: Plants growing in Canada's longest edible walkway in Montreal.

Image: Leanne Werner

p11: Dragonfly. Image: pngmart.com

p16: Apple trees planted by Wilder at King's campus, Strand, London

Image: Leanne Werner

p19: Screen shot from Detroit City's Land Register.

p23: Garden apprentices harvesting food at Toronto Metropolitan

University's urban rooftop farm. Image: Leanne Werner

p27: Both images on the AU/LAB's green roof, Palais des Congrès de

Montréal: Eric Duchemin and Leanne Werner. Image: Leanne Werner

p30: Ladybird. Image: PixelSquid

p35: Bee. Image: stickpng.com

p39: Joyce Dallas, Keep Growing Detroit Volunteer. Image: Leanne Werner

p39: Gateway Community Garden with Pastor Glenda Fields, Sara Elbohy

and Leanne Werner. Image: Leanne Werner

p41: Regulars at Carrefour Solidaire's community kitchen in Montreal.

Image: Leanne Werner

p41: Canada's longest edible walkway in Montreal. Image: Leanne Werner

p44: FoodShare's Orlando Martin Lopez Gomez and Leanne Werner at

Burmhampton High School farm. Image: Leanne Werner

p48: Montreal rooftop farm, Carrefour Solidaire. Image: Leanne Werner

p48: City Beet Farm stall in Vancouver. Image: Leanne Werner

p51: Leanne Werner. Image: Helena Smith

About Leanne



Leanne Werner is dedicated to transforming urban spaces into thriving havens for wildlife and communities. She is co-founder and director of Wilder, an environmental social enterprise based in London that creates spaces for wildlife and people in ultra-urban areas. One of Wilder's flagship projects is the Wilder Mile, a project to radically improve biodiversity in one square mile of Southwark by calling on organisations and individuals to commit to wildlife friendly interventions.

Some of Wilder's projects include de-paving and transforming concrete spaces into a lush wildlife-friendly gardens, working with universities such as King's College London to increase biodiversity on their campus on the Strand, advising Tate on actions to increase biodiversity on all their sites, as well as creating a wildflower meadow on the riverside of Tate Modern.

Leanne's background is rooted in advocacy and community. Her passion for increasing biodiversity was fuelled during her stint as a councillor in Southwark. Here, she championed the conversion of concrete jungles into green oases, catalysing projects like the transformation of polluted side-streets into vibrant pedestrian areas and the cultivation of community orchards. Her leadership extended to chairing a scrutiny commission on the climate emergency, which was instrumental in shaping Southwark's robust climate strategy, lauded as one of the nation's most formidable.

Beyond her commitments to Wilder, Leanne serves as a trustee of Trees for Bermondsey, a charity dedicated to preserving and expanding urban tree canopies. Through her passion and commitment to urban nature, she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship, allowing her to explore best practices in urban agriculture across the United States and Canada.

Now back in UK she plans to incorporate her findings into the work at Wilder and persuade policy holders and organisations to commit to joining the new urban agricultural revolution by investing in and supporting sustainable food-growing projects.

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Environment Scrutiny Commission

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