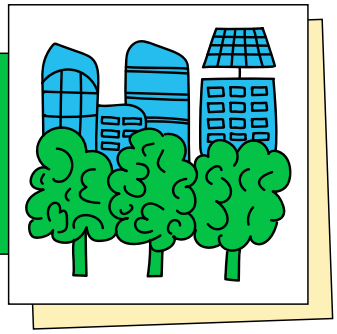
C40 URBAN NATURE ACCELERATOR



Making cities greener and more resilient with solutions from nature

COMMITMENTS

2-year commitments:

1. Make nature goals public
2. Develop support and skills building programmes for green jobs
3. Develop a process for involving vulnerable and marginalised communities
4. Conduct gap analysis and mapping to show where new greening is needed
5. Accelerate action to address governance barriers to implementation and mobilise access to investments and resources

5-year commitments:

6. Implement new or enhanced public green spaces and green streetscapes in areas with the greatest impact on the most vulnerable
7. Complete a baseline natural vegetation inventory and undertake natural capital accounting to raise awareness of the associated value of urban nature
8. Develop new inclusive governance frameworks, practices, and programmes
9. Update climate action plan adaptation actions to reflect ambitious nature targets

SIGNATORY CITIES

Amman, Athens, Austin, Barcelona, Berlin, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Chennai, Copenhagen, Curitiba, Delhi, Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Durban/eThekwini, Freetown, Guadalajara, Haifa, Karachi, Lima, London, Los Angeles, Medellín, Milan, Montréal, Mumbai, New Orleans, Paris, Quezon City, Quito, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Rotterdam, Salvador, San Francisco, São Paulo, Seattle, Stockholm, Sydney, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Tokyo, Toronto

SUMMARY

As cities worldwide grapple with climate breakdown and rapid urbanisation, the need for inclusive, resilient, and nature-rich urban environments has never been more urgent. Cities are poorly planned around urban sprawl and car dependency, while nature is pushed out. Meanwhile, the climate crisis significantly exacerbates risk in cities. Urban areas are especially vulnerable to rising temperatures due to the urban heat island effect, with cities up 10°C hotter than surrounding rural areas. By 2050, 1.6 billion urban residents are projected to face extreme heat, with over 800 million vulnerable to sea-level rise and over 650 million facing water scarcity.

Nature can heal, mitigate climate breakdown impacts and safeguard cities from climate hazards. Equitable access to nature improves mental and physical health, supports social cohesion and community wellbeing, and builds more inclusive economies. With roughly half of the world's annual GDP – US$44 trillion – dependent on nature, a shift toward a nature-positive economy is necessary. By 2030, this transition could create 395 million jobs and US$10.1 trillion in business value, while contributing to healthier and more resilient communities.

The C40 Urban Nature Accelerator was launched in 2021 to support mayors to increase and enhance nature in their cities, reduce climate risk and vulnerability, support wider ecosystem services, and make green and blue spaces accessible and equitably distributed. To achieve this, **41 global cities** have committed to deliver on one or both of the pathways to increase green and/or permeable

spaces and ensure access to green or blue spaces by 2030 in line with their objectives, priorities and context.

Signatory cities have made significant progress toward Accelerator commitments from 2023–25. Nearly half of reporting cities have met Pathway 1 (49% up from 43% in 2023), which requires that at least 30% of the city built-up surface area is green or permeable. Similarly, 74% of cities reporting on Pathway 2 (up from 52% in 2023) have ensured that 70% of their population has access to a suitable green or blue space within a 15-minute walk.

A total of 30 cities have implemented major nature and resilience projects such as creating green corridors, new parks, or undertaking large-scale tree planting initiatives, often coupled with strong community engagement. **São Paulo** has established 300 rain gardens, opened 6 new urban parks, created 3 conservation units, and planted more than 250,000 native Atlantic Forest trees since joining the Accelerator. The city also designated its first Municipal Forest with 250 hectares of protected land. In **Chennai**, 143 urban parks and 16 sponge parks have been developed to mitigate flood risk and support groundwater recharge in vulnerable zones. The city has also launched three flagship parks, spanning 38.8 acres of green space focused on biodiversity and flood resilience.

Many cities have also updated policies, plans, or strategies to better integrate nature, from embedding green infrastructure in masterplanning documents to developing standalone biodiversity strategies. These actions have begun to shape more coherent and long-term approaches to nature in urban contexts. **Barcelona** has recently updated its Climate Plan to incorporate explicitly nature-related goals – focusing on nature's ability to combat climate hazards like extreme heat and flooding. **Seattle**'s new Tree Code ensures that each tree of a certain size that is removed will be replaced with two others, and that heritage trees are protected.

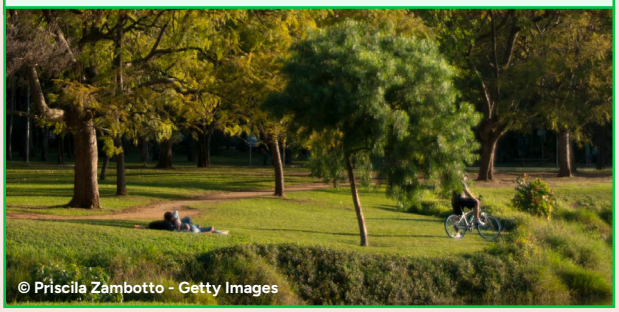
Signatory cities are also strengthening their institutional capacity to deliver on nature goals. To improve decision-making, 31 cities have started creating robust baselines through mapping, gap analyses and monitoring of nature and biodiversity. Fifteen cities have secured new funding for nature, either through national or multilateral sources or by allocating greater resources within municipal budgets. In parallel, 25 cities have developed support structures or skills-building programmes for green jobs, ensuring local communities benefit directly from investments in nature. In **Lima**, for instance, the 'Lima Verde' Urban Tree Planting Programme has planted 260,000 trees (with a survival rate of over 85%) and trained more than 12,800 people on urban tree planting and maintenance – including residents, students, authorities, and volunteers. In **Dhaka North**, community volunteers are also receiving urban nature training, and in **Dhaka South**, local communities have been involved in tree planting projects. **Tokyo** has been training volunteers in greenspace maintenance and conservation in conservation areas, so that community members can learn how to protect and restore natural sites.

Investing in green and permeable spaces reduces flooding risks and mitigates urban heat, making communities safer, liveable, and more resilient in the face of a changing climate. Green jobs programmes are providing new skills and creating sustainable livelihoods for all, but particularly young people, women, and marginalised communities. By involving residents in planning and decision-making, cities are ensuring that the benefits of nature are shared more equitably. C40 Urban Nature Accelerator signatory cities are demonstrating that urban nature is fundamental for building more climate-resilient, healthy and equitable cities. By harnessing solutions from nature, we can create better lives for urban residents everywhere.

IMPACT

49% (17 out of 35 cities reporting)

have achieved
Pathway 1: Green and permeable cover
(30-40% of the total built-up city-surface area is green and/or permeable space)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74% (17 out of 23 cities reporting)

have achieved
Pathway 2: Equitable access to nature
(70% of the city population has access to a fit for purpose green or blue space within 15 minutes)


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COMMITMENTS

95%
have made their nature goals public

84%
have developed support and skills building programmes for green jobs

95%
have developed a process for involving vulnerable and marginalised communities

87%
have conducted a gap analysis and mapping of where new greening is needed

92%
have accelerated action to address governance barriers to implementation, and mobilised access to investment and resources

MAIN ACTIONS CITIES HAVE TAKEN IN THE LAST TWO YEARS

81%
are engaging local communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of their nature activities

81%
are collecting data on, measuring, and mapping biodiversity and nature

79%
are implementing major projects such as new parks, green corridors, and large-scale tree planting

66%
are implementing green jobs programmes related to nature

TURNING COMMITMENT INTO ACTION

Commitment 1: Make nature goals public

Medellín promotes itself as a green city through its City Development Plan 2024–27 and ambitious Renaturalisation Plan, where nature is treated as a key pillar. The Renaturalisation Plan brings together existing city strategies and plans with multi-scale planning and urban greening efforts, while providing guidance for major challenges concerning urban nature in Medellín.

Sydney's goals and targets for enhancing urban nature are laid out in The Greening Sydney Strategy. The city's targets include achieving a minimum of 40% total green cover, including 27% tree canopy cover, by 2050. In 2023, the city also adopted updated versions of several key documents following a comprehensive review: Urban Forest Strategy, Street Tree Master Plan, Tree Species List, Community Gardening Strategy, Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan, and many more.

New Orleans' updated Climate Action Plan, published in December 2022, contains ambitious nature goals. These include 40,000 trees planted by 2030, at least 10% canopy coverage in all neighbourhoods in the next decade, and completing at least 15 additional green infrastructure projects by 2035, which will divert an additional 80 million gallons.

Commitment 2: Develop support and skills building programmes for green jobs

Freetown's community tree-growing initiative #FreetownTheTreeTown has generated 2,825 direct green jobs in tree nursing, planting and maintenance, plus over 4,000 indirect green jobs, more than double the 2023 baseline. Of these direct green workers, 67% are women, 95% are youth, and all live in economically disadvantaged communities with high and recurring risks of climate impacts, including coastal and hillside informal settlements.

Toronto supports green infrastructure (GI) maintenance through its equity-focused GreenforceTO programme, which recruits and trains individuals for green jobs. Entering its fifth year in 2025, the programme's three mini-projects are an expansion of the 2023 sod alternative pilot programme, a redesign of resource intensive sites, and an 'adopt a GI' programme that engages with the community to raise awareness about GI maintenance and scale across the city.

Austin's Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC) connects communities historically excluded from environmental fields to over 700 meaningful, well-paying green jobs. The newly created Green Infrastructure job family opens clear, long-term career pathways in stormwater management, ecological restoration, climate resilience and more. The Parks and Recreation Department's Arborist Job Family promotes professional growth and advancement in tree care and urban forestry.

Commitment 3: Develop a process for involving vulnerable and marginalised communities

In **Durban/eThekwini,** the Biodiversity Management and Climate Change departments have partnered to deliver capacity building workshops in marginalised communities, with the aim of sourcing and incorporating Indigenous knowledge to biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation.

Karachi's council has, for the first time, representation of transgender minorities. The councillors partake in the execution of greening initiatives within the wards and zones they represent. Vulnerable communities have also played an active and important role in the development of the city's Climate Action Plan.

Under **Buenos Aires'** urban planning laws, residents of vulnerable neighbourhoods actively participate in decision-making on actions to be taken in their respective neighbourhoods through Participatory Management Tables (MGP). This also includes actions taken in favour of nature, provided they take place in the neighbourhood.

Commitment 4: Conduct gap analysis and mapping to show where new greening is needed

Paris is protecting residents' health through urban nature by developing a green space deficiency map, which is now embedded in the regulations of the Local Bioclimatic Urban Plan and in the new Paris Health and Environment Plan, adopted in November 2024. The plan identifies areas most exposed to climate hazards and inequalities, highlighting where new greening is needed, existing spaces that should be improved, and access gaps. The city has set goals to ensure equitable access to nature and greenery to reduce social, territorial, and environmental health inequalities.

Guadalajara has placed nature at the core of its strategy to address urban heat islands and improve resilience and quality of life. Guadalajara has mapped urban heat islands and existing urban nature, and identified priority areas for new greening. Nature is now a central pillar of the city's planning. Within this framework, the city launched the Comprehensive Urban Tree Management Plan, which calls for planting over 20,000 trees annually, producing native species, consolidating 70 green corridors, monitoring and managing urban trees, creating new green spaces on former concrete sites, and promoting a tree-adoption campaign for residents. Guadalajara has seen the reduction of heat islands across the city.

Commitment 5: Accelerate action to address governance barriers to implementation and mobilise access to investments and resources

Freetown is registering its tree assets under the Verra Carbon Standard, creating a sustainable revenue stream for ecosystem-based adaptation and job creation by unlocking private sector investments through voluntary carbon markets. The city has also mobilised over US$2 million in climate and development finance through multilateral funds in the last two years.

Mumbai institutionalised an independent Environment and Climate Change Department in 2024 to steer the implementation of the Mumbai Climate Action Plan (MCAP). In the same year, the city also released its first climate budget, which directly integrates MCAP targets into Mumbai's financial planning, and will be updated annually to guide future investments. The climate budget also helps monitor progress and identify funding gaps, as well as bridge those gaps through external financing mechanisms.

Montréal is prioritising investments in nature-based solutions through its first-ever climate budget, presented in 2024. This process integrates climate considerations into all city investments, specifically targeting a minimum of 10-15% of the city's ten-year investment programme for projects dedicated to climate change adaptation, including urban nature activities. This ensures that resources are directly aligned with Montréal's broader ecological transition and resilience goals.


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INSPIRATION

In drafting its Green Plan, **Milan** took inspiration from the work done by other European cities – in particular **Paris, Barcelona,** and **London** – in developing integrated plans and strategies for urban green management and climate adaptation. The city is also inspired by the experience of Paris and Barcelona on creating 'school oases' – redeveloping and opening schoolyards to the public and using them as cool spaces and spaces for socialising.

Austin's green infrastructure initiatives have drawn inspiration from leading practices in cities across the country and around the world. By studying successful approaches in places like **Portland, Paris,** and **Phoenix** – where green streets, rain gardens, and urban forestry are used to manage stormwater and reduce heat – Austin has adapted and tailored these strategies to meet local environmental and equity goals.

Rio de Janeiro's Extreme Heat Protocol – the first municipal heatwave response protocol in Brazil – was inspired by the protocol established by **Paris.** Passed by a decree in 2024, Rio de Janeiro's heat protocol establishes guidelines for alerts, mitigation, and protection of vulnerable groups along different 'heat levels' which are classified based on a combination of the city's average temperature and relative humidity.

COLLABORATION

Many of **Salvador's** actions focused on promoting employability and green jobs were carried out in partnership with the private sector. For the city's urban garden and orchard programme, the selection, implementation and maintenance of green spaces are carried out in partnership with various stakeholders, with an emphasis on residents in vulnerable neighbourhoods and the LGBTQ+ community.

In **Seattle,** the Green Seattle Partnership programme works with staff from Seattle Parks and Recreation, professional contractors, community organisations, and individual volunteers to restore urban forests in the city. The city's Forest Stewards are core volunteers who coordinate restoration activities in their neighbourhoods, while the community organisations often support hiring youth and underrepresented residents to lead restoration activities.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Chennai's TN-SHORE initiative, launched in February 2024, is restoring 1,076km of coastline with active participation from local communities. Residents are directly involved in mangrove planting, coral reef protection, and sustainable fishing practices, gaining practical skills while contributing to the health and resilience of their environment. By positioning communities as custodians of their coastline, TN-SHORE supports livelihoods, fosters social inclusion, and strengthens ecological resilience, ensuring that both environmental and economic benefits are equitably shared.

Athens' Climate Forum and Youth Climate Action Council, established in 2024 by the Deputy Mayor for Climate Governance and Social Economy, brings together representatives from academia, civil society, the private sector, and city governance. Together, they co-design climate initiatives, participate in workshops on nature-based solutions and green space management, and ensure the voices of vulnerable or traditionally underrepresented communities are included in decision-making. Projects such as the Podoniftis River regeneration in northwestern Athens exemplify this approach, fostering inclusive planning, community engagement, and equitable environmental outcomes.

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CHALLENGES

Limited financial resources to work on nature, and difficulties tapping into national or multilateral funds to implement nature-based solutions

Cities need support with **defining key indicators** and **building methodologies, data collection and monitoring systems**

Governance challenges, including **silos** and **lack of cross-departmental cooperation**, as well as **limited knowledge of the many benefits** of nature-based solutions, and **limited staff capacity** pose a barrier

Lack of vacant land to be developed as green public spaces, with nature provision often not prioritised

Difficulties in greening private spaces, and **incentivising residents and private actors** to do so

Lack of financial resources and staff for **maintaining nature** projects in the long-term

Lack of available water for nature is an issue that will worsen with the climate crisis

Although many challenges remain and can threaten or backtrack progress, signatory cities are actively looking for ways to address these in various ways. **Toronto** recently approved an operating budget of C$85.1 million (US$61 million) to support urban forestry and urban nature, consisting of C$25.3 million for tree planting and natural area management and C$48.4 million for tree maintenance – exemplifying that nature can, and should be, prioritised in municipal budgets.

Through its participatory budget programme, **Quito**'s residents participate in the analysis, discussion and decision making on at least 60% of each zonal administration's budget. **London** periodically updates its tree canopy and green cover assessments to ensure decisions on nature are made based on the latest available data. **Curitiba** has strengthened inter-sectoral coordination between municipal departments, expanded institutional capacity and reduced administrative barriers. **Rome** successfully recovered over 70 hectares from building development, planned for greenspace provision instead. **Rotterdam** provides subsidies to residents and private owners to implement greening activities, such as creating green roofs and depaving their gardens.

HOW CITIES ARE STEPPING UP THEIR ACTION

The next five years will be crucial in scaling ambition and action so all signatory cities successfully meet their 2030 commitments. Since the launch of the Accelerator, cities have made excellent progress toward nature-rich urban environments, with a significant number of cities having already met their pathway goals, and a majority having fulfilled their two-year commitments.

Signatory cities' work to embed nature is more important than ever as climate-related hazards like extreme heat and flooding become more frequent across the globe. Cities are collecting biodiversity data and mapping nature against socio-economic indicators. **Stockholm** has recently finished updating its mapping of existing green infrastructure, informing actions to be taken to meet the city's biodiversity goals. **Tel Aviv** completed a municipal nature survey of 200 sites, with 68 receiving in-depth assessments, to identify areas lacking in ecological infrastructure. **Los Angeles** is currently conducting sophisticated 10m-resolution nature equity mapping to identify the city's most vulnerable communities. Signatory cities will also continue updating plans and strategies, laying the foundation for more ambitious nature actions. **San Francisco, Copenhagen** and **Rio de Janeiro** are currently updating their climate action plans to centre nature as key for climate adaptation, whereas **Berlin's** climate action plan is due for revision in 2026.

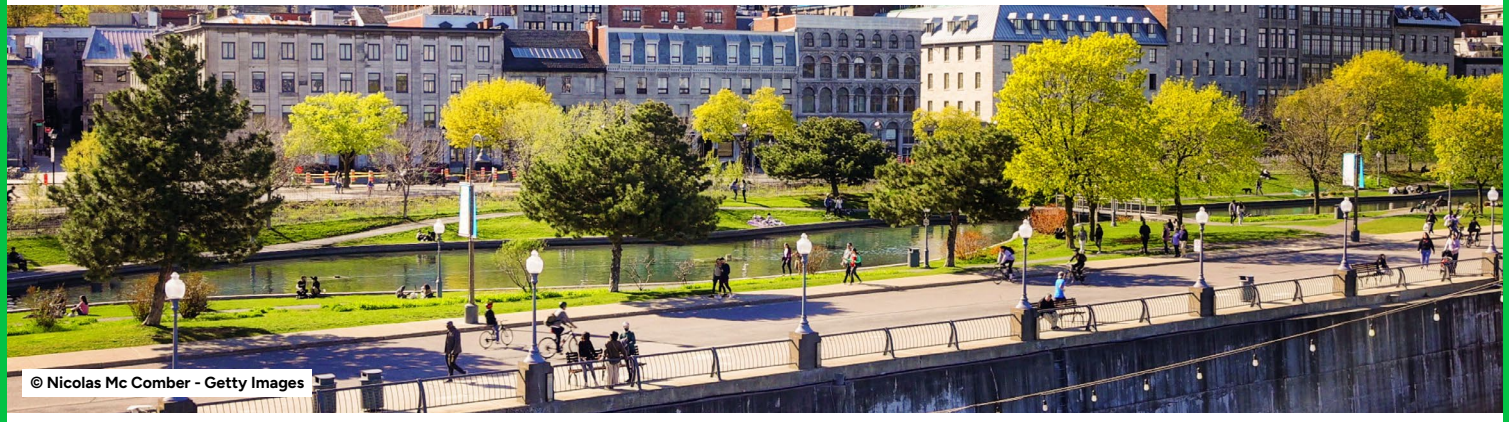
By building upon progress already underway and exchanging knowledge and best practices through city-to-city networks, and with C40's continued support, cities can further accelerate action and overcome barriers to become greener and more resilient by 2030.

FUTURE ACTION

Quezon City is set to open 34 new city-owned parks and develop 4.9 kilometres of GORA (Green, Open, Resilient, and Accessible) Lanes – dedicated pedestrian corridors that encourage walking, reduce reliance on motorised transport, and expand green public spaces. The city will continue actively implementing the One Million Trees Programme to boost climate resilience and air quality, the Generation Restoration Project to transform the former Payatas dumpsite into a green space, and the Green Resilient Cities Initiative to enhance social housing through green infrastructure.

Montréal plans to build about 1,319 new bioretention cells on the street (9,600 square metres or 2,600 cubic metres) and 7 sponge park projects (5,000 square metres). These projects are currently being designed, and will be mostly built in 2026. About 40 other sponge park projects (roughly 29,000 cubic metres) are currently in the works.

Guadalajara will plant more than 20,000 trees, continue strategic planning in the most climate-vulnerable neighbourhoods to mitigate the urban heat island effect, recover and reclaim grey spaces for more than 1,700 plantings, promote an 'Adopt a Tree' initiative so that citizens can request a tree, and continue the monitoring and technical management of the city's urban trees.



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