

## NARRATIVE STATEMENTS TO JOIN THE BIOPHILIC CITIES NETWORK

**Narrative Statement #1:** *A statement of the key ways in which the city is already biophilic (extent to which nature may already be found in the city and where/in what ways) and the key initiatives, programs, policies and projects already undertaken to advance the agenda of biophilic cities.*

### Municipal Biodiversity Program

The City of Los Angeles has a robust, globally-recognized Biodiversity Program. LA Sanitation & Environment (LASAN) leads the City's Biodiversity Program and is working diligently with the Biodiversity Expert Council, the Biodiversity Interdepartmental Team, and Biodiversity Stakeholders to achieve the 10 biodiversity goals in LA's Green New Deal (2019 Sustainable Cities pLAn) and in the City's Biodiversity Motion (CF # 15-0499).

The Biodiversity Program's Vision Statement reads:

“Los Angeles is a City where all Angelenos value biodiversity, honor and respect nature, and steward the natural world, ensuring that ecosystems are protected, enhanced, and restored, environmental and public health benefits are maximized and equitably shared by all, and that Los Angeles is a resilient, biophilic City for generations to come.”

### The LA City Biodiversity Index

In order to track progress on biodiversity initiatives, the Biodiversity Team is using a special tool called the LA City Biodiversity Index. The LA City Biodiversity Index is tailored specifically to the LA context and is designed to monitor progress toward the no-net loss of native biodiversity target. The LA City Biodiversity Index was crafted with the guidance of project stakeholders and an Expert Council of local practitioners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scholars, and City staff. The hope is for the index to be institutionalized as a tool to guide long-term management and monitoring of biodiversity. The index includes 25 individual metrics that cover three major themes:

1. Conservation of Native Species & Ecosystems
2. Social Equity Considerations
3. Management & Governance

## Wildlife Ordinance

City Planning initiated the Wildlife Pilot Study in 2016 in response to a Motion introduced by City Councilmember Paul Koretz. The Motion called for the Department to create an ordinance with a set of land use regulations that would maintain wildlife connectivity in the city.

The overall goal of the proposed regulations is to balance wildlife habitat and connectivity with private property development thereby achieving more sustainable outcomes in the hillsides and habitats of Los Angeles.

By ensuring that such development takes place in a more sustainable manner, the City can help to address and support other essential goals such as biodiversity, climate resilience, fire safety and watershed health.

Together, these goals create a more livable city for everyone.

## Certification as a Community Wildlife Habitat

In May 2021, the City of Los Angeles became the largest City in the USA to be certified by the National Wildlife Federation through the Community Wildlife Habitat Program. This accomplishment is a real testament to the power of collective action by Angelenos, who registered 1078 residential yards, 34 schools, and 140 common areas, that cumulatively allowed the City to become certified as a whole. The City registered for the program with the National Wildlife Federation in August 2020.

To achieve Citywide certification, the City of Los Angeles encouraged residents, schools and organizations to apply for and achieve their own certification by gardening with wildlife in mind, using native plants and sustainable practices, providing cover and food, and reducing or eliminating the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Designing gardens and green spaces following these principles supports wildlife, restores connectivity, and enhances climate resilience.

The City was recently recertified as a Community Wildlife Habitat in August 2022.

## Safe Clean Water Program

In 2018, Los Angeles County voters approved Measure W, a special parcel tax funding the Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP). This program provides local, dedicated funding to increase water supply, improve water quality, and create community enhancements throughout the County while supporting compliance with federal clean water mandates and addressing climate change.

A key focus of the Safe, Clean Water Program is the concept of water capture, which involves collecting rainwater - cleaning it, storing it, and using it locally. This can be achieved through a variety of methods, including nature-based solutions with a focus on a multi-benefit approach that takes into consideration how other environmental, community, and economic benefits can be achieved.

**Narrative Statement #2:** *A statement of goals and aspirations for the future. This part of the statement would describe the specific steps the city will undertake to enhance nature or the position of nature in the community. This section can be in the form of a text narrative, a set of bulleted actions, or a combination of both.*

Looking ahead, the LASAN Biodiversity Team intends to ramp out outreach activities and implementation projects that will help the City achieve its broad biodiversity initiatives. Planned next steps can be broadly grouped into five categories:

1. **Integrate Biodiversity into City Projects:** The Biodiversity Team plans to work to better integrate biodiversity elements/considerations into City projects.
2. **Develop Biodiversity Guidelines:** Another major goal is to develop Biodiversity Guidelines that will help project managers incorporate biodiversity-friendly practices into their designs. The guidelines will provide guidance to public and private landholders on how to best design projects and sustainability manage properties in order to improve habitat quality and enhance local biodiversity.
3. **Study Best Biodiversity Practices from Around the World:** The City of Los Angeles plans to continue looking to other cities in the state and nation and across the globe for inspiration, especially in regards to policy and models for incorporating biodiversity interests into all municipal projects.
4. **Intensify Nature:** Perform public education and outreach to encourage Angelenos to intensify nature through the use of nature-based solutions across the City. This can be done by creating pollinator gardens, planting native plants, creatively adding green space and green infrastructure to small spaces (e.g., rooftop gardens and vertical gardens), and using sustainable, regenerative practices (e.g., avoiding the use of herbicides, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers).
5. **Strategically Pursue Implementation Projects:** Lastly, the LASAN Biodiversity Team intends to partner with the Biodiversity Expert Council and Interdepartmental Team to strategically pursue implementation projects that will conserve, restore, or protect local ecosystems. However,

the City must first understand where implementation projects will be the most impactful. To this end, LASAN, Recreation & Parks, City Planning, and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains are hoping to jointly develop a prioritization scheme that will guide City efforts to conserve and protect biodiversity while also increasing access to parks and to nature. The intent is for the scheme to balance access to nature, restoration, patch size, edge effects, and connectivity. The prioritization exercise should ideally arm City staff with a strategically developed list of priority projects to pursue. Further, the hope is that the output of this project will be an agreed upon prioritization for conservation and restoration projects that City departments and land managers could work to collectively realize, increasing effectiveness and cohesion of local conservation efforts.

We feel strongly that the City of Los Angeles has much to gain by learning from other cities, states, and nations across the globe. We can use the great work that others host on platforms like the Urban Biodiversity Hub, CitiesWithNature, and, particularly, Biophilic Cities to improve the impact of our work here in LA, especially in regards to policy and models for incorporating biodiversity interests into all municipal projects.

Los Angeles is excited to engage with the Biophilic Cities Network and is optimistic about the exchange of ideas and information it will bring. We look forward to developing more connections in the global network of biodiversity advocates in order to promote biophilic design, advance biodiversity policy, promote harmonious coexistence with wildlife, and enhance land stewardship.

### **Biophilic Cities Indicators:**

Los Angeles proposes to use the 25 metrics in the LA City Biodiversity Index to assess and evaluate progress on biophilic initiatives over time. Collectively, the topics covered in the index comprehensively assess not only what is happening to habitats and how well connected various habitats are, how the City is engaging with students and the larger community on the topic of biodiversity and how the City itself is working to protect endangered species and manage threats, like invasive species. Major benchmark assessments of the biodiversity index will take place once a decade. In the interim, monitoring assessments will occur approximately every three years to gauge progress. The 25 metrics are as follows:

- 1.1a: % Natural Areas
- Habitat Quality of Urban Landscapes & Open Space
- Habitat Quality of Streams
- Connectivity of Natural Areas
- Connectivity of Urban Landscapes & Open Space
- Connectivity of Streams and Riparian Areas

- % Open Space with Charismatic Umbrella Species
- Native Species Presence in Urban Areas
- Species of Conservation Concern Gained or Lost
- Urban Edge Effects on Natural Areas
- Presence & Spread of Invasive Plants
- Wildfire Frequency
- Access to Natural Areas
- Neighborhood Landscape/Tree Canopy Footprint
- School (K-12) Biodiversity Topics
- Off-Campus Biodiversity Educational Visits
- Campus Nature Education Gardens
- Community Scientist Activities and App Utilization
- # Certified Biodiversity-Friendly Areas
- Biodiversity Vision/Action Plan
- % Departments with Biodiversity Programs & Policies
- % Protected Natural Areas
- Protected Natural Areas Management and Monitoring
- Management of Invasive Species & Pests
- Management of Species of Conservation Concern

Detailed descriptions and the baseline scores for each metric are included in the [LA Biodiversity Index Baseline Report](#).

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