

First, healthy urban biodiversity provides important 'ecosystem services' to human society, e.g., flood mitigation, temperature & climate regulation, and pollination of food crops (as an aside, honey produced from the rooftops of buildings in downtown Paris are sold and used in local businesses in that city). It would be prohibitively expensive, if not impossible, to replace these natural services with human-created ones. On a smaller scale, use of native plants in parks, urban greenspaces, and backyards can reduce overall costs because they require little to no maintenance once established (in other words, are self-sustaining).

Second, biodiversity builds community and social capital. Urban greenspaces (from nature reserves to downtown 'pocket' parks) can serve as a point of pride for communities and are integral to the development of community identity. Having an opportunity to spend time outside in the company of others has been shown to increase and enhance social connectivity, and contribute to improved and enriched quality of life for residents.

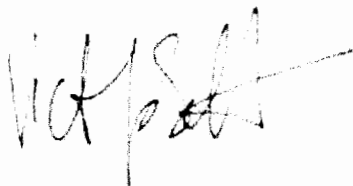
Third, urban biodiversity provides considerable psychological benefits. A great deal of research has shown that spending time in natural areas like forests and parks can lower our physiological stress response and improve our attention. Indeed, arriving at a local urban park like the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary can provide a breathtakingly immediate respite from the hustle and bustle of the city (not to mention the opportunity to see and hear an incredible variety of songbirds). The popularity of the 'The High Line' park in a dense urban core like Manhattan is also testament to the restorative power and draw of these spaces.

Fourth, urban biodiversity can enhance learning, development and educational opportunities for children (and university students). Considerable discussion and research is directed at addressing 'nature deficit disorder, and urban greenspaces can also provides children opportunity for unstructured play and exploration. I can speak from personal experience of the importance of observing natural ecological processes out of doors can enhance student learning significantly and considerably (not to mention sparking a lifelong interest and passion for environmental and social sustainability). Last, I argue that we should maintain and enhance urban biodiversity because it has *intrinsic* or *existence* value. Moreover, sharing our city with biodiversity can be seen as a reflection of our empathy and our inherent and deep-rooted desire to connect with nature, the natural world, and other living things.

The City of Calgary's Biodiversity Strategic Plan incorporates a large-scale vision of integrating biodiversity and natural systems into the everyday functioning and long term planning of the city. This systems approach is complemented by specific actions and initiatives relating to: (i) improving ecological literacy and engagement around biodiversity, (ii) identifying and protecting key habitats, connective corridors, and ecological processes, (iii) mitigating degraded habitat and removing invasive species, and (iv) addressing key legislative and regulatory challenges to these initiatives. This Plan is an important first step in ensuring a resilient and biodiverse Calgary that provides improved quality of life and opportunity for its citizens and reflects the city's unique ecological and social heritage.

I hope that the City adopts the Biodiversity Strategic Plan and its recommendations.

Sincerely,



Dr. Victoria Campbell-Arvai
Postdoctoral Associate
Department of Geography
University of Calgary
campbelv@ucalgary.ca

