



Overview

Over [80%](#) of Americans live in urban areas, where [daily encounters](#) with biodiversity such as birds, insects, plants, and other species shape how most people experience nature. This **urban biodiversity** isn't just a pleasant feature — it's vital to public health. Diverse ecosystems in cities help [control diseases](#) like West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease, support pollination, reduce heat emergencies, and improve air and water quality. Access to biodiverse green spaces also [boosts mental health](#) and fosters a stronger sense of community and well-being. Yet, these benefits are [not equitably shared](#): low-income neighborhoods often [lack the biodiversity](#) and green space needed to support healthy, resilient communities.

Policy Options

- **[California A.B.1899 \(enacted 2024\)](#)**: Requires a city or county general plan to consider the effect of development on habitat connectivity.
- **[Maine L.D.1751 \(enacted 2025\)](#)**: Requires municipalities to map and incorporate habitat connectivity into their growth management programs.
- **[New Mexico H.M.34 \(enacted, 2024\)](#)**: Establishes a working group managed by the UNM Law School's Wild Friends program to explore the expanded use of citizen science by state agencies to assist with research, data collection, and addressing personnel shortages in state agencies.
- **[Washington DC B24-0710 \(enacted, 2022\)](#)**: Requires the use of bird friendly materials for new building construction or exterior wall improvements.

KEY FACTS

- Cities can be sanctuaries for endangered wildlife. [81% of urban areas](#) are home to birds listed under the Endangered Species Act. For example, the endangered rusty patch bumble bee is mostly found in MN's urban metro area of the [Twin Cities](#).
- Housing supply can be increased while protecting biodiversity by reimagining built infrastructure to include biodiversity-friendly features such as [green roofs](#).
- Recreation in biodiversity-rich areas can be a [mental health intervention](#), with experiences in high biodiversity spaces commonly reducing depression and anxiety.
- Urban street tree canopies are key in mitigating environmental injustices by reducing the [urban heat island effect](#) and extreme heat exposure.
- Participatory and [community science projects](#) can be useful tools in improving access to biodiversity for historically marginalized and under-served communities.

Other Resources

- **University of Southern California**: [Communicating About Biodiversity in simple, approachable, and relatable terms](#)
- **NCEL**: [Pollinator Week 2025: The Change May Be in Your Backyard](#)
- **Book by Max Lambert & Christopher Schell**: [Urban Biodiversity and Equity: Justice-Centered Conservation in Cities](#)
- **US Fish and Wildlife Service**: [Reducing Bird Collisions With Buildings](#)

