

Neighbourhood Development and Support: Inclusive, Active and Vibrant Neighbourhoods



Figure 1 - Two children at a NPIF event

2025 Year in Review



Figure 2 - Orange flower in a community garden plot

Introduction

Strong neighbourhoods are built when residents have opportunities to connect, contribute, and lead. Neighbourhood Development and Support works with residents, neighbourhood associations and community organizations to strengthen neighbourhoods across London.

Neighbourhood Development and Support uses an Asset-Based Community Development approach. Asset-Based Community Development focuses on the strengths and capabilities of individuals and communities. By recognizing and building on these assets, residents are supported to contribute to positive change in

their neighbourhoods. Across the city, Londoners are actively taking leadership roles in their communities. Neighbours organize park clean-ups, maintain skating rinks in neighbourhood parks, grow food in community gardens, and contribute to neighbourhood events that bring people together. Together, these efforts help create neighbourhoods that are inclusive, active, and vibrant places to live.

Supporting the City of London Strategic Plan

Neighbourhood Development and Support contributes to the City of London Strategic Plan priority of Wellbeing and Safety.

Programs and initiatives help ensure that Londoners:

- have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the health and vibrancy of their neighbourhoods
- experience a strong sense of belonging and sense of place

This work supports strategic actions that focus on removing barriers to participation, strengthening volunteerism, and activating parks and neighbourhood spaces that support physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

The following programs demonstrate how Neighbourhood Development and Support helps to further these strategic priorities in neighbourhoods across London. By creating opportunities for residents to connect with neighbours, care for shared spaces, and take leadership in their communities, these initiatives contribute to stronger and more vibrant neighbourhoods.



Figure 3 - An Adopt-a-Park group after a clean up

2025 Impact at a Glance

Neighbourhood Development and Support programs create opportunities for residents to connect with neighbours, care for shared spaces, and take leadership in their communities



Figure 4 - Child spinning a prize wheel at an engagement table

- 21 community gardens across London provided space for 510 residents to grow food and flowers. The gardens brought neighbours together around shared interests, creating spaces where residents connect, share knowledge, and spend time outdoors while growing fresh food.
- 127 parks across London were cared for by volunteer groups, with 30 new groups adopting parks in 2025. Residents played an active role in maintaining neighbourhood green spaces, helping keep parks welcoming while strengthening neighbourhood pride and connection.
- 9 neighbourhood ice rinks were built and maintained by more than 50 volunteers during the 2024–25 skating season. Volunteer rink teams brought neighbours together through free outdoor recreation opportunities and encourage residents of all ages to enjoy winter activities close to home.
- 2,500 Londoners attended 9 Neighbourhood Park Improvement Fund Events in their local park. 30% of attendees visited the park for the first time, demonstrating how neighbourhood events help residents discover and enjoy public spaces in their community while building connections with new neighbours.
- 181 Welcome Bags were distributed to new neighbours by Londoners. These bags helped Londoners learn about local municipal services and opportunities to participate in the community, supporting a stronger sense of connection and belonging from the moment they arrive in their new neighbourhood.
- 37 neighbourhood leaders participated a gathering of neighbourhood leaders and groups, learning approaches to asset-based community development and sharing their experiences at the neighbourhood level.
- 119 community engagements informed residents to City of London initiatives and opportunities to give feedback, such as Let's Talk Parks, the Mobility Masterplan and the Stop TolerHating campaign.



Figure 5 - Teens playing basketball on a court improved through NPIF

Programs that Strengthen Neighbourhoods



Figure 6 - Pumpkin growing in a community garden plot

London Community Gardens Program

The London Community Gardens Program provides residents with opportunities to grow food, connect with neighbours, and care for shared garden spaces across the city. Gardeners contribute their skills, knowledge, and experience to create welcoming, inclusive spaces that strengthen neighbourhood connections. Garden ambassadors and experienced participants play an important leadership role by mentoring new gardeners, sharing knowledge, and supporting the success of their garden communities.

This program reflects an asset-based community development approach by building on the strengths, knowledge, and leadership of residents to grow vibrant, connected neighbourhood spaces.

Season Highlights

- 91% of gardeners reported using their plot to grow food*
- 97% of gardeners plan to register again for the 2026 season*

*2025 City of London Community Gardener Survey

Gardeners consistently highlight the program's role in supporting wellbeing, learning, and connection. Participants report that they value opportunities such as growing fresh food, teaching their children about the environment, and accessing an affordable space to garden and spend time outdoors. Others describe the gardens as places that support mental health, foster positive community relationships, and transform underused spaces into vibrant neighbourhood assets.



Figure 8 - Person planting in an accessible planter



Figure 7 - Cabbage and flowers growing in a community garden plot



Figure 9 - Two Proudfoot gardeners

Proudfoot Park-West Garden

The Proudfoot Community Garden at 693 Proudfoot Lane was redeveloped in 2025, enhancing accessibility, functionality, and overall experience for gardeners and visitors. Improvements included:

- 30 ground plots and 4 accessible raised beds
- New pathways connecting the garden to an upgraded playground
- Tree pruning and removals to improve sightlines and create a brighter, more welcoming space

These enhancements support increased access and create a more inclusive environment where residents of all ages and abilities can participate and connect.

Impact Story – Growing Food Connects the Past with the Present

At Blackfriars Community Garden, Garden Ambassador Anne Marie Allen shares the history of food growing through the vegetables she plants. Each crop in her plot is labelled with its historical use, encouraging visitors to learn about traditional foods and gardening practices. Her garden connects past and present while inspiring neighbours to explore new crops, share knowledge, and learn from one another.

“During the war years, canning wasn’t widely available because metal was needed for the war effort. Most food was stored in root cellars or cold storage, and what you grew had to last through long Canadian winters. In my garden, each vegetable is labelled with its history and purpose. I hope people will take an interest, do a little research, and even try growing some of these themselves. This year, I’m growing Danish Ballhead Cabbages, which store up to eight months; Skirret, a sweet root once used as a candy; Miner’s lettuce, which can be harvested year-round; Earth chestnuts, salsify, and many more. I hope folks will stop by Blackfriars Community Garden to learn more.” – Anne Marie Allen

Adopt-a-Park

The Adopt-a-Park program supports residents and community groups who help care for parks in their neighbourhoods. Volunteer groups organize park clean-ups and encourage neighbours to participate, helping keep neighbourhood green spaces welcoming and well cared for. The program builds on the community pride, leadership, and volunteer spirit already present in neighbourhoods.



Figure 10 - Students of a class that adopted a park

Impact Story – Neighbours Caring for Local Parks



Figure 11 - Adopt-a-Park group after a park clean up

Volunteers from Salvation Army London Village organize regular clean-ups in Kiwanis Park so families and children can enjoy a welcoming space to play. Their long-term commitment demonstrates how residents help care for the parks that bring neighbourhoods together.

"We love giving back to the community and take great pride in keeping our neighbourhood park clean for not only us but for all the kids that come to play here. We have been helping to keep Kiwanis Park clean for the last 15 years or so and look

forward to doing it for many more!" - Salvation Army London Village volunteer

Neighbourhood-Managed Ice Rinks

During the winter months, volunteers build and maintain outdoor skating rinks in neighbourhood parks across London. Neighbourhood leaders draw on their knowledge, skills, and experience to provide opportunities for residents of all ages to gather outdoors and enjoy winter recreation close to home.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated neighbourhood volunteers who worked tirelessly to create and maintain outdoor rinks this winter season. Their time, effort, and community spirit transformed local parks into vibrant gathering spaces where families, friends, and neighbours could come together, stay active, and enjoy the beauty of the season.

In the 2024–2025 season, neighbourhood-managed ice rinks were located at:

- Belvedere Park
- Meredith Park
- A.L. Furanna Park
- Dalkeith Park
- Riverbend Park
- Odessa Park
- Wortley Village Green
- Talbot Park
- East Lions Park



Figure 12 - Odessa Park Neighbourhood Rink

Impact Story – Bringing Neighbours Together in Winter

Volunteers dedicate many hours each winter to building and maintaining neighbourhood ice rinks. One rink lead described how the effort is rewarded by seeing neighbours gather on the ice. These shared moments create lasting memories for the neighbourhood.

“Stories of hours spent on the rink by seniors no longer able to skate. Hearing the banter of an all-ages hockey game. Seeing someone try to skate for the first time. Meeting and working alongside a variety of community and volunteers from outside the neighbourhood who help with the rink, like Mary from Old East Village Community Association. Small personal sacrifices such as creating a neighbourhood-managed ice rink can create lifelong memories for so many.” – Mark Thomas, President, SOHO Community Association

Neighbourhood Parks Improvement Fund (NPIF)

The Neighbourhood Parks Improvement Fund supports improvements to neighbourhood parks across London. Through the City’s 2024–2027 budget, an additional \$4 million was approved to help advance park improvement projects across the city.

When park improvements are completed, the Neighbourhood Development and Support team works with resident leaders, community organizations and City of London representatives to facilitate free community celebration events that invite residents to explore and activate the newly improved spaces while building new

connections with neighbours. In 2025, more than 2,500 residents attended Neighbourhood Park Improvement Fund events in their local park.

Impact Story – Discovering Neighbourhood Parks

One parent shared that their 10-year-old son looks forward to every Neighbourhood Parks Improvement Fund event and never wants to miss one. These gatherings help residents discover neighbourhood parks and enjoy welcoming public spaces close to home.

“My 10-year-old son absolutely loves these events! He always looks forward to each one and doesn’t want to miss any of the neighbourhood events throughout the year. Even when the location is far from home, he insists on going - and every time we return, he’s filled with excitement, joy, and happiness, already checking the schedule for the next event... It’s heartwarming to see how our parks have become more beautiful, modern, and welcoming for



Figure 13 – Musician at a NPIF event



Figure 14 – Children with balloon art at a NPIF event

the community - a reflection of how our city of London continues to grow into a vibrant and livable place.” – Siri



Figure 15 - Welcome Bag contents

Welcome Bags

The Welcome Bag program helps neighbourhood groups welcome new residents to their communities. Bags include information about City services, neighbourhood programs, and local resources that help new residents learn about opportunities to get involved. By sharing information about parks, events, and neighbourhood resources, Londoners help new neighbours feel informed and welcomed as they settle into their new home.

Support to Neighbourhood Associations and Community Groups

Neighbourhood Development and Support works with neighbourhood associations and community groups to support local leadership and community activities. Supports include helping neighbourhood leaders navigate municipal processes and connect with the right City resources to move their ideas forward. The team also provides practical supports such as printing promotional materials for neighbourhood initiatives, assistance with group meetings, and access to resources that help residents organize activities in their communities.

Neighbourhood Association Gathering

In November 2025, Neighbourhood Development and Support partnered with the Urban League of London to host a gathering of neighbourhood leaders. The event brought together representatives from neighbourhood associations and community groups to connect, share experiences, and learn about supports available to strengthen resident-led initiatives.

The gathering featured a presentation on asset-based community development and strategies for engaging residents. Participants also had the opportunity to connect with City staff and neighbourhood leaders from across London.

Participants shared that neighbourhood groups play an important role in fostering belonging, pride in place, and connections between neighbours. Common challenges identified included recruiting volunteers, sustaining leadership over time, and navigating available supports.

Feedback also highlighted strong interest in continued opportunities for peer learning and practical skill-building.



Figure 16 - Three people in discussion

Neighbourhood associations were also invited to participate in online training to build capacity in asset-based community development. Groups could nominate a representative to participate in training focused on building a neighbourhood strategy or strengthening community engagement practices.



Figure 17 – Girl reading sign at Mushkeeki Gitigan Indigenous Medicine Garden

Impact Story: Mushkeeki Gitigan Indigenous Medicine Garden

Neighbourhood Development and Support partnered with the Indigenous Fellowship of Hamilton Road to support Mushkeeki Gitigan, an Indigenous Medicine Garden in South Branch Park. Rooted in a vision of creating a sacred and welcoming space, the garden serves as a place where Indigenous culture, teachings, and medicines are shared with the community.

In 2025, this collaboration included the development of interpretive signage that reflects the cultural significance of the garden and supports learning for visitors. The team also worked with Parks Design and Construction to enhance accessibility through the addition of a new pathway and seating area, making the space more welcoming and accessible to a wider range of community members.

Community gatherings held in June and September brought gardeners and residents together to celebrate recent enhancements and experience the garden as a place of reflection, healing, and connection. Through this partnership, Mushkeeki Gitigan continues to grow as a living expression of Indigenous knowledge and a space for community learning and belonging.

Community Connectors

Community Connectors support outreach and engagement efforts across the city, helping ensure that more Londoners, including those historically underrepresented in civic processes, have opportunities to participate. The team includes Black, Indigenous, and Bilingual Community Connectors who reflect the diversity of London's neighbourhoods and speak a range of languages, including Spanish, Arabic, French, Chinese, and more. Working in community settings, they support engagement for municipal projects and neighbourhood activations, helping build meaningful connections between residents and the City of London. In 2025, Community Connectors engaged with Londoners through 119 engagements on topics from the Mobility Master Plan to the Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update.



Figure 18 - Residents speaking with city staff at a neighbourhood park



Figure 19 - City staff and child at a NPIF event

Impact Story: Community Connector Vinci Chan

"Being a Community Connector was really about building genuine relationships with community members and showing up in ways that felt approachable. Coming from an East Asian background and speaking Cantonese and Mandarin, I was able to share information about City programs and resources in ways that felt more natural for some residents, conversations that might not have happened otherwise. A lot of the time, it started with small moments: someone stopping to chat, asking a question, or just sharing what was on their mind. Those moments built trust, and once that trust was there, residents were more open to learning about programs and services, asking for support, and getting involved in their community.

What stayed with me most is how everyday interactions help build resilience at a community level. When people feel seen, heard, and informed, they're more confident navigating systems and supporting one another. Being part of that process was really meaningful, and it's something I'm proud of from my time as a Community Connector."

Looking Ahead

Neighbourhood Development and Support will continue working with residents, neighbourhood associations, and community organizations to strengthen neighbourhoods across London.

Using an Asset-Based Community Development approach, the team will continue to build on the strengths, skills, and leadership that already exist within neighbourhoods. By supporting opportunities for residents to connect with neighbours, care for shared spaces, and lead community initiatives, these programs help create the conditions for strong and vibrant neighbourhoods.



Figure 20 - Ribbon cutting at a NPIF event