Theory of Change for the AIPH Green City Standard

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Theory of Change

The AIPH Green City Standard is built on a clear **Theory of Change**

Using a theory-based approach allows us to make explicit the assumptions underpinning causal chains from inputs to outputs, through to outcomes, intermediate states and impact.

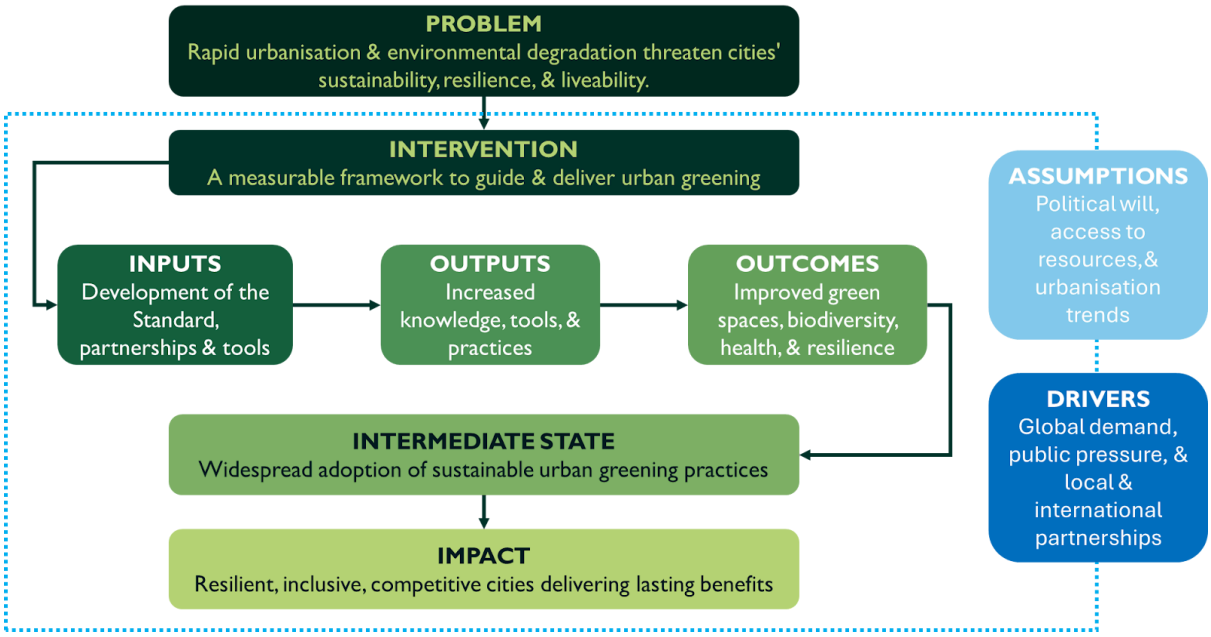

Figure 1. Schematic overview of the Theory of Change underpinning the AIPH Green City Standard.

Problem: Rapid urbanisation and environmental degradation threaten the sustainability, resilience and liveability of cities. Urban greening solutions are urgently needed. However, even in cities with advanced urban greening strategies, initiatives are often disjointed or not strategically planned.

Additionally, despite best efforts, the power of urban greening is often not leveraged across city departments and is rarely well-resourced. Although the variety of benefits gained by good urban greening has been consistently proven through peer-reviewed research, cities are struggling to convince stakeholders of the full value of urban greening. Many cities suffer from a lack of appropriate knowledge in the right place, and cities across the world are not consistently able to learn from one another, preventing good solutions and ideas from having their full effect.

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Solution offered: The AIPH Green City Standard offers city authorities a practical, measurable framework to plan, execute, and enhance urban greening efforts. It is backed by robust indicators, an independent accreditation system, and knowledge resources.

Causal pathway

- **Inputs:** The AIPH Green City Standard; city self-assessment; a learning platform of exemplars, tools and resources; capacity building workshops; an independent accreditation process; a full feedback report from the expert review panel to the cities undergoing an assessment; and participation in a network of AIPH Green Cities.
- **Outputs:** Increased knowledge of tools and urban greening practices available to cities globally; a data set on urban greening implementation globally; research papers, and a wide variety of case studies on urban greening reflecting diverse global contexts.
- **Outcomes (immediate):** Improved knowledge and capacity of relevant people within participating cities; cities are supported to take a more strategic and comprehensive approach to urban greening, and create more effective urban greening plans; appreciation for urban greening increases throughout the participating city; participating cities improve their exchange on urban greening; and accredited cities gain positive attention (e.g. media, tourism, business).
- **Outcome (medium term, 6 months - 2 years):** Accredited cities attract investment and talent, and benefit financially; the financial benefits of good urban greening are better understood, appreciated, and acted upon; accredited cities improve their competitiveness, resilience, and liveability; new investment interest in urban greening is generated; new investment mechanisms for urban greening are generated; a mindset shift occurs: urban greening is not a separate city activity - it encapsulates everything; a mindset shift occurs: urban greening plans and initiatives become more ambitious; there is an increased understanding of what makes good urban greening work in a specific context; Globally, interest in urban greening increases.
- **Impact:** Cities worldwide are transformed into resilient, inclusive, and competitive hubs, delivering long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits. The adoption of the AIPH Green City Standard by cities leads to measurable improvements in urban green spaces, biodiversity, public health, and climate resilience. There is widespread adoption of sustainable urban greening practices globally.

Drivers and assumptions

- **Drivers:** Global demand for greener cities, public pressure on governments, and strong partnerships with local and international stakeholders. Climate adaptation urgency. Climate change and biodiversity are part of the same conversation. Plants are a vital part of climate adaptation.
- **Assumptions:** Continued urbanisation trends, political will for urban greening, and access to resources and expertise. The financial motivation for urban greening continues to become more apparent. Cities accept the power of plans in climate adaptation.

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