



SERVICE DELIVERY PARTY

CAPE TOWN

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSAL

Cooling the Cape Flats

A Climate Equity Programme for Cape Town

Climate resilience, urban greening, pollinators and coastal protection, with the wider Cape Flats as the first priority. Grounded in Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Submitted to the City of Cape Town

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SUBMISSION

Submission details

Item	Detail
To	The Executive Mayor, Council and the IDP Office, City of Cape Town
From	Service Delivery Party (SDP), Western Cape
Prepared by	Mahomed Farouk Cassim, Founder, SDP Western Cape
Contact	mfcassim001@gmail.com sd-p.org
Subject	Climate Equity Programme for the Integrated Development Plan
Primary focus	The wider Cape Flats: Khayelitsha, Mitchell's Plain, Delft, Philippi, Manenberg, Hanover Park and surrounding wards
Constitutional basis	Sections 152(1)(a) to (e) and 153(a), read with Section 24
Date	7 October 2026

PART ONE

Summary and constitutional basis

The Service Delivery Party asks the City of Cape Town to include in its Integrated Development Plan a ten-year Climate Equity Programme that makes the wider Cape Flats the primary target of the city's climate action. Cape Town already holds Leading City status in the C40 network. That leadership is real on paper and at international summits, yet it is unevenly felt on the ground. The southern suburbs and the City Bowl are green, shaded and cool. Khayelitsha, Mitchell's Plain, Delft, Philippi, Manenberg and Hanover Park are bare, hard surfaced and hot.

This proposal sets out thirteen commitments: an urban forest of Cape Floristic Region species on the Flats, the clearing of invasive alien plants, a city-wide pollinator and bee programme, indigenous wildflower verges, permeable paving, cool and green roofs, living walls, heat refuges with water-mist cooling, a phased route to zero-emission vehicles, coastal protection for eroding beaches, a published Climate Equity Index and an annual Cape Flats Climate Week so residents can measure progress ward by ward.

Constitutional basis

Section 152(1)(d) of the Constitution requires local government to promote a safe and healthy environment. Section 152(1)(b) requires the provision of services in a sustainable manner. Section 152(1)(c) requires local government to promote social and economic development. Section 153(a) requires a municipality to structure its administration, budgeting and planning to give priority to the basic needs of the community. Read with Section 24, the right to an environment not harmful to health or wellbeing, these provisions are binding and justiciable.

A city that concentrates trees, shade and cooling in its wealthier areas while its poorest residents absorb the heat does not meet them. Climate adaptation is therefore a service delivery obligation, not a discretionary programme.

Provision	What it requires	Commitments that answer it
152(1)(a)	Democratic and accountable local government	12 Climate Equity Index
152(1)(b)	Services provided in a sustainable manner	02, 05, 06, 10
152(1)(c)	Social and economic development	Local cooperative and EPWP delivery of all planting and clearing work
152(1)(d)	A safe and healthy environment	01, 03, 04, 07, 08, 11
152(1)(e)	Involvement of communities in local government	13 Cape Flats Climate Week
153(a)	Priority to the basic needs of the community	07, 09 and the 60% Cape Flats ring-fence

PART TWO

Where Cape Town stands

Cape Town remains a member of C40 Cities and is listed among its Leading Cities in the network's May 2026 membership update ([C40](#)). It has been a member since 2014. Leading status matters, because C40 reviews every city annually and moves non-compliant cities to Inactive. Durban was in that category in May 2026.

The City's credentials are genuine:

- A Climate Change Action Plan launched on 7 October 2021, committing Cape Town to carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2050 across ten strategic focus areas ([City of Cape Town](#)).
- The only African city on the 2021 CDP Cities A-List for climate reporting and action ([City of Cape Town](#)).
- At the 2025 C40 World Mayors Summit in Rio, the City signed the C40 and UN-Habitat Urban Planning Accelerator and became a founding member of the Thriving Food Systems Accelerator ([City of Cape Town](#)).

A drying climate

The rain belt is moving away from the Cape. The westerly winds that carry Cape Town's winter cold fronts are shifting south towards the pole, so more of the rain falls over the ocean. Scientists link this shift to the 2015 to 2018 Day Zero drought and expect such droughts to recur

more often ([Wits University](#); [Future Climate for Africa](#)). Every measure in this proposal is therefore water-wise: indigenous plants that survive drought, permeable paving that banks rain in the aquifer and mist cooling run on treated effluent.

The SDP's assessment

Cape Town leads in planning, reporting and diplomacy. It does not yet lead in delivery where the heat is worst. Its own 2019 climate risk assessment flagged heat on the Cape Flats as acute for people in poorly built and informal structures, and recommended tree planting and urban greening ([Landscape Architecture Aotearoa](#)). City-wide canopy still sits at about 6%, below the FAO 10% goal the City itself cites and far below the 30% neighbourhood benchmark of the 3-30-300 rule ([GroundUp](#)).

Leadership must now be measured on the Flats, not in Rio.

PART THREE

Two Cape Towns

On one hot day in 2024, air temperatures across Cape Town differed by as much as 16.3°C ([GroundUp](#)). The hottest readings came from dense, built-up areas with no trees. Researchers on the Heat Watch campaign described the Khayelitsha area as having virtually no tree cover or vegetation to cool it ([Daily Maverick](#)).

This is not an accident of nature. University of Cape Town modelling across ten South African cities found surface temperature gaps of 6 to 10°C between neighbourhoods, tied to land cover, income and historical settlement planning. Wealthier, historically white areas have far more trees and run cooler ([PrepareCenter](#)). Apartheid planning placed Black and Coloured families on the exposed, sandy, wind-swept Flats. The canopy gap is its living legacy.

	Southern suburbs and City Bowl	Wider Cape Flats
Tree cover	Mature canopy, much of it in private gardens	Sparse to none in many wards
Ground surface	Lawns, gardens, shaded streets	Sand, tar, concrete, corrugated iron
Housing	Insulated, ceilinged homes	Many backyard and informal structures without ceilings
Cooling at home	Air conditioning affordable	Electricity costs prohibit it
Heat exposure	Lower	Highest in the city

The SDP's position is simple. Every rand of climate adaptation spending that lands in an already green suburb before the Flats is a rand spent against the priority Section 153(a) requires.

The Cape Flats must be first in the queue, and the IDP should say so in writing.

PART FOUR

Lessons from leading cities

None of the measures below is experimental. Each is already working somewhere, and each can be adapted to the Cape Flats at municipal scale.

Where	What they do	What Cape Town should take
France (incl. Paris)	Since 2015, new buildings in commercial zones must partly cover their roofs with plants or solar panels (Stormwater Report). Toronto, Copenhagen and Zurich go further on green roofs.	A by-law requiring solar or greenery on all new commercial, industrial and large residential roofs
Denmark	Municipalities such as Mariagerfjord are replacing mown lawns with native flowering meadows to feed bees and butterflies (Cittaslow).	Fynbos and renosterveld verges, mown once a year after seeding
Netherlands	Respyre, a TU Delft spin-off, makes a bio-receptive concrete and plaster that grows moss on existing walls (MaterialDistrict). Trial facades ran up to 15°C cooler than bare concrete (New Rules).	Pilot on south-facing walls of clinics, schools and rental blocks on the Flats, using local moss and lichen species
China	Yuncheng in Shanxi fitted rooftop mist systems that cool surrounding streets by 5 to 8°C in minutes (Interesting Engineering). Chongqing bus stops use misting at about 10% of the energy of air conditioning (TV BRICS).	Mist cooling at taxi ranks, bus stops, clinic queues and public squares, run on treated effluent
Amsterdam	A Clean Air Action Plan phasing petrol and diesel vehicles out of the area inside the A10 ring, buses and taxis first, private cars by 2030 (NL Times).	A staged zero-emission route starting with the City's own fleet, MyCiTi and minibus taxis
Many cities	Permeable paving lets rain soak into the ground instead of running off, recharging aquifers and cooling surfaces.	Permeable sidewalks and parking on the Flats, recharging the Cape Flats Aquifer

Two cautions apply. Mist cooling uses water, so in Cape Town it must run on treated effluent and switch off during drought restrictions. Vehicle bans must never price the poor off the road, and the Amsterdam plan itself was criticised on affordability. The SDP therefore proposes a phase-out that starts with public and commercial fleets, not with working families.

PART FIVE

The thirteen commitments

The SDP asks Council to adopt the following commitments in the IDP, each with a named directorate, a budget line and a ward-level target.

01

A Cape Flats Urban Forest

Section 152(1)(d): a safe and healthy environment

Plant one million trees and large shrubs across the Flats over ten years, lifting canopy in every Flats ward towards 15% by 2036 and 30% thereafter, in line with the 3-30-300 rule. Use the dense pocket-forest method already proven in Langa and Mitchell's Plain. Prioritise schools, clinics, taxi ranks, bus routes and the walking routes to them.

02

Plant the Cape Floral Kingdom

Section 152(1)(b): sustainable services

All City planting is to use species of the Cape Floristic Region by default: milkwood, wild olive, keurboom, Cape willow, wild almond and dune species on sandy ground, with fynbos and renosterveld beneath. Indigenous plants need less water, survive Cape winds and feed local wildlife. A City nursery network on the Flats will grow the stock and employ local residents.

03

Clear the invasive aliens, replace the forage

Section 152(1)(d): a safe and healthy environment

Remove Port Jackson, rooikrans, invasive gums and pines from public land, wetlands and river corridors on the Flats, starting with fire and water-loss hotspots. Clearing and replanting must be sequenced together, because gum trees are currently a major bee food source and bare ground after clearing harms pollinators ([Food and Home](#)).

04

A Cape Town Pollinator Strategy

Section 152(1)(d): a safe and healthy environment

Make bee survival an explicit City priority. Adopt a pollinator plan for the Cape honeybee and indigenous wild bees: year-round flowering forage on City land, a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides in City maintenance, protected nesting habitat and support for registered

beekeepers. Forage shortage, not disease, is the main threat to Western Cape bees ([Sentinel News](#)). Part Six sets out the detail.

05

Wildflower verges

Section 152(1)(b): sustainable services

Convert road verges, median islands and municipal lawns to indigenous flowering verges, mown once a year after seed set. Mowing less is cheaper. A University of Ottawa study found lighter roadside maintenance raised pollinator numbers by 45% ([uOttawa](#)). Major routes such as the N2, the R300 and Lansdowne Road should become flowering corridors, with low shrubs near heavy traffic and clear sightlines at intersections.

06

Permeable paving as standard

Section 152(1)(b): sustainable services

All new and resurfaced sidewalks, parking areas and public squares on the Flats to use permeable paving where ground conditions allow. Rain then recharges the Cape Flats Aquifer instead of flooding streets and homes.

07

Cool roofs and green roofs

Sections 152(1)(d) and 153(a): a healthy environment and priority to basic needs

Adopt a Paris-style by-law requiring solar panels or vegetation on new commercial, industrial and large residential roofs. Scale up the reflective roof-paint trials in Khayelitsha into a free programme for every informal and backyard dwelling, and fund ceilings for RDP houses.

08

Living walls

Section 152(1)(d): a safe and healthy environment

Pilot moss and lichen plaster, modelled on the Dutch bio-receptive method, on City buildings, schools and council rental stock on the Flats, with UCT and CPUT testing local species and measuring wall temperatures.

09

Heat refuges and mist cooling

Section 153(a): priority to basic needs

Install shade structures and effluent-fed mist cooling at taxi ranks, bus stops, clinic queues, pension pay-points and public squares. Open air-cooled heat refuges in libraries and community halls during heat alerts, with an SMS heat warning service in English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans.

10

Zero-emission transport, starting with the City

Section 152(1)(b): sustainable services

Convert the City fleet and MyCiTi to zero-emission vehicles by 2032. Support minibus taxi owners with financing to switch. Introduce a low-emission zone in the CBD for heavy diesel vehicles before any measure affecting private cars. Expand walking and cycling routes on the Flats.

11

Protect the coast

Section 152(1)(d): a safe and healthy environment

Restore dunes, enforce a coastal setback line and nourish the most eroded public beaches, with the False Bay beaches of the Flats given equal priority. Part Seven sets out the detail.

12

A Climate Equity Index

Section 152(1)(a): accountable government

Publish annually, ward by ward, the canopy cover, land surface temperature, permeable surface, alien clearing, verges converted and heat refuges available. Report it alongside the DEMI-DC dignity data so residents can measure whether the Flats are closing the gap.

13

A Cape Flats Climate Week

Section 152(1)(e): involving communities in local government

Hold an annual Climate Week in early September, alongside Arbor Week and the spring flowering season. The programme should include school planting days, community heat-mapping with volunteers, verge and dune planting at Monwabisi and Strandfontein, a youth climate assembly that reports to Council and the release of the Climate Equity Index. Climate Week turns residents from spectators into participants, and gives activism a lawful, constructive channel into the IDP.

PART SIX

A city for bees

Cape Town should declare itself Africa's first Bee City, with the Cape honeybee as its emblem. The Cape bee, *Apis mellifera capensis*, occurs naturally only in the south-western Cape. Its workers can lay eggs that hatch into females, which no other honeybee can do. Its greatest threat in the Western Cape is hunger, not disease.

Forage to replace the aliens

Clearing gum trees without replanting would starve the Cape bee, because gums currently fill the winter and dry-season gap. A study valued the bee forage from one gum species in the Western Cape at around US\$20 million a year in replacement cost ([AGRIS](#)). Indigenous replacements should be planted before or alongside clearing, guided by SANBI and local beekeepers.

Plant group	Indigenous species for bee forage
Winter gap	Aloes, especially <i>Aloe arborescens</i> and <i>Aloe ferox</i> , wild dagga (<i>Leonotis</i>) and tree fuchsia (<i>Halleria lucida</i>)
Fynbos shrubs	Pincushions (<i>Leucospermum</i>), proteas, Cape snow bush (<i>Metasia</i>), wild rosemary (<i>Eriocephalus</i>), buchu and beach salvia
Groundcovers and daisies	Sour fig (<i>Carpobrotus</i>), vygies, gazanias, Namaqualand daisies and pelargoniums
Trees	Wild peach, Cape chestnut and keurboom (<i>Virgilia</i>)

Until these plantings flower, non-invasive gum species should be kept in fenced bee pasture zones. Non-indigenous herbs such as borage, lavender and rosemary are excellent bee plants for food gardens and school gardens. City verges and parks should stay indigenous.

Bee reserves at the universities

In the United States, more than 200 universities are certified under the Bee Campus USA programme run by the Xerces Society. Each commits to native planting, nesting sites, reduced pesticides and public education ([UC Nature](#)). Cape Town has two natural anchors. UCT sits beside Table Mountain National Park and Kirstenbosch. The University of the Western Cape holds the Cape Flats Nature Reserve, which protects critically endangered Cape Flats Sand Fynbos on the Flats itself.

The SDP proposes a Cape Flats Bee Reserve centred on UWC, with CPUT and UCT as research partners. The City would fund signage, a fynbos nursery and monitoring. The universities would supply research and student service-learning.

What gardeners and schools can do

The City should run a Bee-Friendly Garden and Bee-Friendly School certificate, with free indigenous plant packs through libraries and ward offices. Residents and schools should be urged to:

1. Plant indigenous flowers so that something blooms every month, especially aloes for winter.
2. Leave patches unmown, and leave some bare sandy ground for the many wild bees that nest underground.
3. Put up bee hotels for solitary bees and a shallow water dish with stones to land on.
4. Stop using pesticides on flowering plants, especially neonicotinoids.

5. Call a registered swarm remover, never an exterminator, when bees move in.
6. In schools, plant a pollinator garden, teach bees in the Natural Sciences curriculum and adopt a nearby verge.

By-law reform

The by-laws should change, though Cape Town should copy Paris selectively. Paris adopted a Beehives and Pollinators plan in 2017 and rooftop hives multiplied ([Jacques Julien](#)). Paris researchers then found fewer wild pollinator visits where honeybee hives were densest ([HAL](#)). The Cape bee is also more defensive than European bees. Cape Town's by-laws should therefore put flowers before hives:

1. Count indigenous flowering green roofs towards the roof by-law in commitment 07.
2. Prohibit the killing of bee swarms where safe removal is possible, and require pest controllers to refer swarms to registered removers.
3. Replace blanket distance bans with a permit system that lets registered beekeepers keep a capped number of hives on suitable roofs, schools and City land. Older Western Cape bee by-laws, such as Swartland's, allow refusal within 400m of any school ([Laws.Africa](#)). The City should review its own bee provisions against this standard.
4. Ban neonicotinoid pesticides on City land and in City contracts.
5. Prohibit mowing of designated wildflower verges during the flowering season.

PART SEVEN

Saving the beaches

Cape Town's beaches are narrowing. Sea level around the city has risen an estimated 10 to 15cm since the mid-1900s, and stronger storms now strike from that higher base. Strand, Sea Point and the Milnerton lagoon area are already badly exposed ([Daily Maverick](#)). The City has itself acknowledged that the public beach at Milnerton was washed away, that it has considered retreat there and that coastal infrastructure has been underfunded ([GO Express](#)). Monwabisi and Strandfontein, the False Bay beaches of the Cape Flats, have also suffered serious erosion ([Cape Argus](#)).

The beaches of the Flats matter differently. For families in Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain, Monwabisi, Mnandi and Strandfontein are the nearest free relief from summer heat. Losing them is a loss of a basic public amenity. The SDP proposes:

1. Restoring dune cordons with indigenous dune plants, and removing the rooikrans and Port Jackson that destabilise them. Wide sandy beaches with healthy dunes absorb storm energy better than concrete walls.
2. A coastal setback line enforced against new development close to the high-water mark.
3. Beach nourishment programmes for the most eroded public beaches, with False Bay beaches on the Flats given equal priority to Atlantic seaboard beaches.
4. Rebuilding and maintaining tidal pools, ablutions, shade and lifeguard facilities at Monwabisi, Mnandi and Strandfontein.

5. An annual published shoreline survey, so residents can see whether each beach is gaining or losing sand.

PART EIGHT

Implementation, funding and targets

The programme should be ring-fenced: at least 60% of the City's climate adaptation capital spending over the IDP term is to be spent in Cape Flats wards until the Climate Equity Index shows the heat and canopy gap closing.

Funding. The City can draw on its existing green bond track record, C40 and multilateral climate finance, national adaptation grants and the Expanded Public Works Programme for labour. Alien clearing, nursery work, tree planting and verge conversion are labour intensive. They should be delivered through local cooperatives and EPWP teams drawn from the wards they serve, so that climate spending also answers Section 152(1)(c) on social and economic development.

Target	By	Lead directorate
Climate Equity Index baseline published for every ward	June 2027	Spatial Planning and Environment
Pollinator Strategy adopted; neonicotinoids out of City maintenance	2027	Spatial Planning and Environment
First Cape Flats Climate Week held	September 2027	Spatial Planning and Environment with Community Services
Paris-style roof by-law and bee by-law amendments adopted	December 2027	Spatial Planning and Environment
Reflective roof coating offered to every informal and backyard dwelling on the Flats	2028	Human Settlements
Heat refuges and mist cooling at the 50 busiest Flats transport interchanges	2028	Urban Mobility
Cape Flats Bee Reserve established with UWC	2028	Spatial Planning and Environment
250 000 trees planted on the Flats	2029	Recreation and Parks
Half of City-owned verges on the Flats converted to indigenous wildflowers	2029	Urban Mobility with Recreation and Parks
Dune restoration at Monwabisi, Mnandi and Strandfontein complete	2030	Spatial Planning and Environment
City fleet and MyCiTi zero-emission	2032	Urban Mobility

Target	By	Lead directorate
One million trees planted; 15% canopy in every Flats ward	2036	Recreation and Parks

Progress against each target should be reported to Council every six months and published on the City's website.

CONCLUSION

Request to Council

Cape Town has earned its place among C40's Leading Cities. The test of that leadership is whether a child in Khayelitsha is as cool on a February afternoon as a child in Constantia. Today the answer is no, and the difference can exceed 15°C.

The Service Delivery Party requests that Council:

1. Adopt the Cape Flats Climate Equity Programme and its thirteen commitments into the IDP.
2. Ring-fence at least 60% of climate adaptation capital spending for Cape Flats wards for the IDP term.
3. Publish the Climate Equity Index baseline by June 2027 and report progress every six months.
4. Recognise, in the IDP text, that climate adaptation on the Flats is a service delivery obligation under Sections 152(1)(b), 152(1)(d) and 153(a) of the Constitution.

A city that plants its trees where its poorest people live, feeds its bees, keeps its beaches and cools its taxi ranks will lead the world on climate in substance, not only in summit communiqués.

The Cape Flats is where that leadership must begin.

REFERENCES

Sources

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