

BIODIVERSITY

Communications Toolkit

Sustainable Backcourts Initiative

Lead and partner organisations

- GOW (Gibson St, Otago St and Westbank Quadrant) Residents Group

Aims and objectives

- To encourage revitalisation of backcourt space

Target audience

- Residents in the Gibson Street, Otago Street and Westbank Quadrant area of Glasgow
- Businesses in the relevant area

Background

Rubbish, rodents and overgrown vegetation – that was the view which greeted the occupants of around 150 homes all looking out onto the same Glasgow backcourt.

A handful of people decided to get together to discuss the problem with the other residents. They found that there were a few like-minded people who wanted to start a clean-up and the project began.

The area is a quadrant of housing with a combination of privately-owned property and houses rented by students with absentee landlords.

Summary of activity

The GOW Residents Group began clearing the backcourt, but they weren't just looking for a short-term fix. They wanted to reach a long-term solution for the ongoing maintenance of the space.

The group contacted Kelvin Clyde Greenspace, which came on board to assist by providing resources, funding and a valuable network of contacts.

• Sustainable Backcourts

KCG initiated the Sustainable Backcourts Initiative – mainly due to the problems they found in the GOW area – with a number of housing associations who had shown interest in the project. Funding was obtained for landscape architects to carry out a study into the potential for backcourt re-design to meet the needs of the residents in four areas.

• Public Consultations

A full programme of public consultations was carried out to obtain residents views and opinions on the regeneration of the backcourt space.

• West End Festival

Residents were so pleased with their efforts in improving the space they invited the West End Festival to use the backcourt during celebrations. The space has been used for several years to host short scenes from Shakespeare plays.

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Outcomes

Residents were inspired by the changes to their backcourt, the gradual greening of their courtyard and the fantastic use of space.

Previous landscaping had left three raised beds in the courtyard which had been overgrown with saplings and weeds. A wide variety of plants were introduced to make the most of sun and shade and to compliment the existing areas of grass and mature trees. These beds now play host to a butterfly garden, a herb garden and a tiny wildflower garden.

Praise for the project has been received from landlords and from residents. The residents group is hopeful that they will be able to maintain the new look backcourt and is committed to ensuring it does not fall into disrepair again. Residents have identified a devoted core of volunteers who will maintain the work and have received assurances from others who are available to be called in if necessary.

A programme of educating new residents, particularly new students who take up residence each academic year has been introduced.

Further information

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