

Urban Forest, Beautification & Boulevard Tree Planting

Information & Process Package



What is an Urban Forest?

While many people think of street trees when they think of the urban forest, it is much more than that. The urban forest is the complex system of trees and smaller plants, wildlife, organisms, soil, water, and air in and around our City. It is the trees along our streets, the landscaping around our homes and institutions, the vegetation in commercial and industrial areas, and the multi-layered forests in our natural areas and the plants in our parks.

The urban forest contributes to healthy watersheds, provides wildlife habitat, reduced urban temperature, improves air quality and opportunities for outdoor recreation. A healthy urban forest is essential to our quality of life, aesthetically contributes to our neighbourhoods and is an asset that increases in value over time.

What is an Urban Forest Plan?

The urban forestry plan will provide an urban forest vision for the community and guide the policies, regulations and programs that are required to make this vision a reality.



Saxer Park is one of the few remaining Douglas-fir stands in North Nanaimo.

What can I do to help?

There are many ways to get involved. While some require a time commitment, most activities can be completed on your own or with your neighbours. Activities on City owned property must have permission before proceeding.

URBAN FOREST PLAN

The urban forest plan is being written throughout 2007. The process will include a number of stakeholder meetings and public open houses. Anyone is welcome to attend the open houses and participate in the surveys and visioning.

Throughout the process, there will be updates on the City of Nanaimo website. Open houses will also be advertised in newspapers. For more information, contact the Urban Forest Coordinator at 756-5200.



Bowen Park is a centrally located node of urban forest.

VOLUNTEERS IN PARKS PROGRAM (VIP)

The Volunteers in Parks Program (VIP) is a public participation program designed to bring the ideas and efforts of volunteers together with the City of Nanaimo, Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture in order to create, develop and improve our parks and open spaces. This program utilizes the talents, skills and energy of volunteers to develop, maintain and beautify Nanaimo's many new and old open spaces, parks, trails, and urban forest.



Street tree planting on Craig Street.

Anyone can volunteer his or her ideas, hands, time or supplies. A single individual, a group of neighbors, a club and even small businesses are encouraged to participate in this program. Municipal parkland and some non-parkland may be suitable for your ideas. VIP projects can be as small as planting and maintaining a flower bed on a traffic island or can be as ambitious as developing a neighbourhood playground. If you are unsure whether or not a specific property is a park, check the City Map system at www.nanaimo.ca or call us at 756-5200. For more information about VIP, refer to the VIP Overview and Information Package.

BEAUTIFICATION AND BOULEVARD TREE PLANTING

Nanaimo's urban forest and aesthetics are an important part of creating a great sense of place. Neighbourhoods in the Old City Quarter, Haliburton and Craig Streets have planted street trees along their boulevards. Neighbourhoods in other areas of town are adopting traffic circles and road side flower beds for planting. Each of these projects is careful to avoid utility lines, and heed traffic visibility. In most cases, the City provides the plants and trees, while the neighbours provide installation, labour and maintain the vegetation.



Planted traffic circle at Kennedy and Prideaux Streets.

INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

Nanaimo's parks are becoming infested with many invasive plants, including Scotch Broom, English Ivy, English Holly, Daphne or Japanese Spurge, Himalayan Blackberry and Japanese Knotweed. These plants have few competitors and quickly take over an ecosystem degrading the habitat for many native plant species. Through the Volunteers in Parks Program, the neighbours of Brookwood and Roxanne Parks have successfully removed Scotch Broom and Himalayan Blackberry from their parks, while a number of high school students have cleared Daphne and other invasive plants from Colliery Dam and Saxer Park. The City will provide education and some tools for volunteers interested in removing invasive plants while walking through the parks and/or organizing more substantial work parties. In some cases, restoration planting will follow the removal of invasive plants to minimize soil erosion and promote the re-establishment of native plant habitat.



High school students removing Daphne and other invasive plants from Colliery Dam Park

What do I start?

Municipal parkland and some non-parkland may be suitable for your ideas. VIP projects can be as small as planting and maintaining a flower bed on a traffic island or can be as ambitious as developing a neighbourhood playground. If you are unsure whether or not a specific property is a park, check the City Map system at www.nanaimo.ca or call us at 756-5200.

What happens next?

If you are initiating a project under VIP, once your call or letter is received, the Parks Department will contact you to further discuss your ideas. Generally, a neighbourhood meeting is held to see if there is support for your ideas. If there is local support, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture will assist you in working towards achieving your neighbourhood goals.

The City may supply you with the following:

- Technical assistance
- Supplies and materials
- Manpower
- Training and instructional workshops
- Financial aid
- Recognition for your efforts



Typically, a neighbourhood meeting at the site begins a VIP project process.

What are the benefits of the VIP Program?

VIP activities get people outside and involved in improving Nanaimo's parks. Equally important, however, is the community development efforts. Without exception, neighbours who often have not even met before work together to improve their community.

Typical process for a Beautification Project

PROJECT PLANNING

- Project idea is initiated by a neighbour.
- The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department sends out a letter inviting residents within a 400-metre radius (5-minute walking distance) of the site to become involved in park improvements and to attend an initial community meeting.
- The neighbourhood meets with City of Nanaimo staff (usually at the undeveloped park on a Saturday morning) to discuss project possibilities, the VIP program, and the process. If the project is largely supported by those attending, a Park Development Committee is formed. The group works with Parks Staff to develop a site plan.
- Each project is different in scope and, consequently, resource needs vary. If you are initiating a large project or are requesting financial aid, you will likely be required to submit a proposal to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission detailing your neighbourhood park vision, financial needs and project scope. The Park Development Committee works to develop this proposal.
- If the site or project is controversial, a neighbourhood survey is sometimes required to establish what a neighbourhood's park vision is.
- The neighbourhood composes and distributes a newsletter with a site plan to let the neighbourhood know what the Committee is proposing. This should be done prior to planting or the committee appearing before the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission. Sometimes, Parks staff also post a sign with the site plan at the site.
- If a proposal has to be submitted, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission reviews the project proposal. A few Committee members usually attend a meeting and give a short presentation. It is best to appear before the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission in the winter or early spring to ensure that there are still VIP funds available for your project.
- If permission and funding is granted, project implementation begins.

- Typically, the first step in a beautification project is site clean-up, invasive plant removal, and site preparation. Depending on the context, the City may take care of this or volunteers may be required to help out.
- The second step is usually acquiring the plants, benches, trees, soil and other elements required to implement the site plan. This will likely include purchasing items and acquiring cash or service donations. Neighbours are usually expected to help out with this acquisition.
- The third step is usually a neighbourhood planting work bee where the bulk of the planting is done. Generally, the City Urban Forest Coordinator or Gardeners supervise the layout, planting and finishing. Shovels and wheelbarrows will be required on site. Water and refreshments are also a good idea. In some cases, extra soil, mulch and tree stakes are also needed. City staff will initiate a BC1 “Call Before You Dig” request within 10 days prior to planting. This ensures that all utility lines are marked on the ground and avoided prior to the planting day. November through February are the preferred months for planting.
- Neighbours are usually expected to help in the organizing, planting, and long-term watering and weeding of the site.



*High school students
beautifying a road
closure.*

Typical VIP process for Invasive Plant Removal Project

PROJECT PLANNING

- A group of volunteers or interested resident contacts the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture to suggest a site or find out which parks are in greatest need of invasive species removal. Sometimes, invasive plant removal is also required as the first step in a beautification project.
- The volunteer group or resident organizes one or more volunteer “work bees” at the site.
- City of Nanaimo staff will provide training for the volunteers prior to the work bee or at the beginning of the scheduled work bee. Training generally takes an hour.
- Parks, Recreation and Culture staff may provide some loppers, hard hats, tarpaulins and information sandwich boards; however, resources are limited.
- Volunteers are asked to bring their own work gloves, sturdy shoes, loppers, pruners and other supplies.
- Volunteers bring all the waste that’s been removed to a central area, and the City of Nanaimo disposes of the waste following the work bee.
- Some sites benefit from restoration planting following invasive plant removal. Replanting helps to stabilize the now exposed soil and establish native plants. The City can work with the volunteer group to determine what native plants are appropriate for restoration planting at each site. For small sites, plants can be ordered and planted on the same day as the invasive plant removal work bee, but in most cases, planting occurs at a subsequent work bee. Plant ordering and delivery to the site will be arranged by the City.
- Fundraising is recommended for invasive plant removal projects. Volunteers can canvas local businesses for refreshment donations for the work bee. Financial donations can be put toward the required equipment and/or native plant purchases.
- Invasive plants removal is a long-term process. While the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture is very interested in one-time work bees, volunteer groups that adopt a site for long-term invasive plants management is also desirable.



Scotch Broom is a common invasive plant found in the area.

Also refer to the Controlling Invasive Plants: Information and Process Package for more information.

*T*ypical VIP process for a Boulevard Tree Planting Project

PROJECT PLANNING

- Project idea is initiated by a neighbour.
- A neighbour (or group of neighbours) canvases the neighbourhood to determine who is interested in having a tree planted along their boulevard. The neighbourhood appoints a coordinator to liaise with the City and to develop a plan showing who wants a tree and the location they would like to see the trees planted in.
- Neighbours are expected to help in the planting of the tree, as well as long-term watering and weeding.
- The City is expected to look after pruning and pest control. Funding for the trees generally comes from BC Hydro or other sources.
- Generally, planting 10 to 25 trees is a suggested project size. This provides street impact and is not too cumbersome to manage.
- The neighbourhood coordinator submits the plan to the City Urban Forest Coordinator. The Urban Forest Coordinator reviews the plan and analyzes the desired locations, as well as municipal servicing and overhead utilities.
- The neighbourhood and Urban Forest Coordinator finalize tree locations, as well as species and submits an application to BC Hydro or other funding source for trees. (BC Hydro funds tree planting only.)
- The City Urban Forest Coordinator will initiate a BC1 “Call Before You Dig” request within 10 days prior to planting. This ensures that all utility lines are marked on the ground prior to the planting day.
- The neighbourhood organizes a planting day. Generally, the City Urban Forest Coordinator or Gardeners supervise the hole digging, planting and finishing. Shovels and wheelbarrows will be required on site. In some cases, extra soil, mulch and tree stakes are also needed. November through February are the preferred months for planting.



Typical tree boulevard planting sign.