

These steps to naturalization are provided as a guideline for community associations and groups within Calgary who are interested in working with the City to create a naturalized open space.

What is Naturalization?

Naturalization is a process for transforming an open space into one that reflects the naturally-occurring landscape of the region. Naturalization includes the purposeful reintroduction of native plant species to an area in order to enhance the natural environment and increase biodiversity.

Who can do Naturalization?

A community project manager leads the project on behalf of the community and follows the Steps to Naturalization (see other side).



Why Naturalization?

Why is naturalization important for Calgary?

Naturalization supports biodiversity conservation

The City of Calgary aims to restore 20 per cent of open space by 2025 (key target of Our BiodiverCity: Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan).



Naturalization is cost-effective

Naturalization can reduce maintenance costs when compared with traditionally manicured areas (mowing, fertilizers, pesticides, etc).

Naturalization builds resilience

Naturalization improves an ecosystem's ability to cope with extreme weather events and pest outbreaks.



Naturalization provides the opportunity for nature education

Naturalization fosters education about nature and develops ecological literacy in Calgarians.

Naturalization is beautiful

Naturalization has aesthetic value and adds to the diversity of landscapes across Calgary.



Naturalization is healthy

Naturalization promotes mental health and relaxation. It encourages more diverse recreational uses of a space.

What does Naturalization Look Like?

Variety of plants

Naturalized areas contain a variety of different types of plants. Forested naturalized sites may contain trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses. Grassland or meadow sites may contain a variety of shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers.

Early Years

Naturalized areas can appear unkempt during the first several years. Given time to establish, they will appear like a landscape that has always been there.

Size

Naturalized areas can be as small as a garden of several square meters, or as large as a regional park.

Location

Naturalized sites can be located anywhere, including private gardens and backyards, schoolyards, public open spaces, parks, and roadsides.

Site Usage

Some naturalization sites will take mowed areas with little active use by citizens and change them to areas that can be enjoyed through activities such as wildlife viewing, photography, nature appreciation and relaxation. Naturalized sites are sensitive to foot traffic in the early years, so please respect area closures in effect.

Site Maintenance

Naturalized sites do not look formal or manicured (traditional horticultural practices). Once established, they may not require costly maintenance practices like pruning, trimming, fertilizing, or pesticide spraying.



Guiding Principles

There are seven guiding principles that frame our naturalization projects:

Connectivity: Increasing the connectivity of Calgary's parks and open spaces will enable wildlife movement and native plant growth

Biodiversity: Increasing the variety of plants and animals in an ecosystem

Structure: Constructing a landscape that has multiple layers which can include: the upper storey (tall trees), understorey (smaller trees and shrubs), and groundcovers (grasses and wildflowers)

Management and Monitoring: Performing stewardship and regular care of the landscape

City-Led Engagement: Undertaking purposeful dialogue between The City, citizens, and stakeholders when appropriate

Community-Led Engagement: Holding informal discussions with the community and local residents

Education: Helping the community understand ecology and the importance of parks and open space

Steps to Naturalization

These steps to naturalization are provided as a guideline for community associations and groups within Calgary who are interested in working with the City to create a naturalized open space.

1 Site Analysis

Complete a thorough review of the existing conditions on the site to identify areas that could be considered for naturalization.

Who is involved?

- Community project manager
- Calgary Parks
- Design professionals (if assistance is needed)

Things to Consider:

- Site history, current site usage and activity types
- Site context, soil analysis, topography, microclimate, existing vegetation
- Budget

Step Deliverables:

- Project summary and purpose
- Site description / observations
- Base plan with existing conditions and project boundary

Timeline: 2-3 months



2 Initial Discussions

Discuss with local residents as early as possible. Inform The City of the project to discuss goals and feasibility.

Who is involved?

- Community project manager
- Calgary Parks (if assistance is needed)
- Residents

Things to Consider

- Engagement fosters stewardship
- Project eligibility and feasibility

Step Deliverables

- Written record of resident feedback

Timeline: 6-12 months



3 Concept Planning

Create a general, schematic plan that illustrates the site layout and the proposed naturalization area.

Who is involved?

- Community project manager
- Calgary Parks
- Design professionals (if assistance is needed)

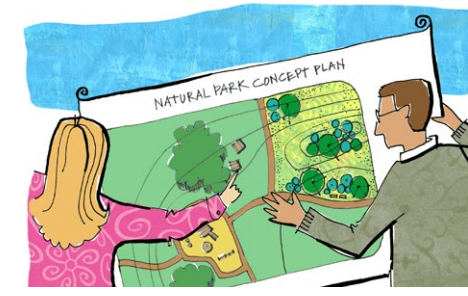
Things to Consider

- How to show the intended design of the site (signage, pathways, strategic mowing)
- Native plant species appropriate for the site conditions
- Seating, existing plants, built elements, topography, pathways, distinct edges, water, exposure and views, signage

Step Deliverables

- Schematic concept plan

Timeline: 4-6 months



4 Detailed Discussions + Final Planning

Discuss potential funding, construction strategies, and the level of City involvement needed for implementation.



Who is involved?

- Community project manager
- Calgary Parks
- Design professionals (if assistance is needed)

Things to Consider

- Changes to timing
- Funding
- Community stewardship
- Regulatory approvals and permits required

Step Deliverables

- Formal City approval
- Construction plans
- Management and maintenance plan

Timeline: 4-6 months

5 Implementation + Construction

Coordinate with The City, a contractor, and/or volunteers to implement the naturalization project.



Who is involved?

- Community project manager
- Calgary Parks
- Design professionals (if assistance is needed)
- Landscape contractor
- Community volunteers

Things to Consider

- Site preparation
- Control of invasive plants
- Appropriate time and conditions for planting
- All necessary approvals have been obtained

Step Deliverables

- Construction schedule
- Contract with landscape contractor
- Construction and planting

Timeline: 1-3 months

6 Post-Construction

Monitor the site and plant growth carefully and regularly. Weeding and watering will be required while the site establishes.



Who is involved?

- Calgary Parks
- Local community association (if stewardship is desired)

Things to Consider

- Naturalization takes time
- Site may appear unkempt while it establishes
- Care and maintenance is most intense during the first 2 years

Step Deliverables

- Record of activity monitoring

Timeline: 2+ years