

Neighbour to Neighbour (N2N) Resilience Initiative Summary of Program Activities

Prepared by: Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Specialist

Prepared for: N2N Committee

(Emergency Program Officer and Manager of Sustainability)

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Overview

Through the [Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Initiative \(N2N\)](#), the District of Saanich supports residents' projects to address emergency preparedness, climate action, and caring for nature at a neighbourhood scale. It offers workshops and a grant of up to \$500 for groups of Saanich residents living in the same multi-unit building or within three blocks of each other in ground-oriented buildings. It is a joint initiative by the Saanich Emergency Program, Sustainability Division, and Parks Division, using a Council grant administered by the Finance Department.

Program History

The program launched in an educational form in 2020 providing resilience activity information on the Saanich webpage during the early parts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2021, Council updated the Council Grants policy to introduce the Neighbour to Neighbour grants.

The grant and workshop offer were officially launched to the public in October 2022. At program launch, the grant was only accessible after a group completed a series of three workshops led by Saanich staff. Only one group accessed the workshops and a grant

under this process, with many inquiries into the program not proceeding with an application.

In response to low participation, in late 2023 the N2N Program updated the offer to separate the workshop offer from the grants, rather than making the workshops a necessary pre-requisite to access the grant. The change to the grant requirements resulted in many more successful applications compared to the original process, as described in the Grants Disbursed section below.

Project Highlights

From program inception to date, neighbourhood groups in Saanich have completed a total of eight resilience projects, with several other projects underway. Completed project summaries are available on the Saanich website at [N2N Completed Projects | District of Saanich](#), and are highlighted below:

Mystic Vale and Beyond: A Wildlife Corridor

Neighbours removed invasive species and planted native species on a public right of way near their homes in Cadboro Bay adjacent to the Mystic Vale property. The grant supported the purchase of native plants from a local nursery. Neighbours got to know each other better as they restored a natural area and new signage helped inform visitors to the busy walking trail about the project and benefits of native plants.

Hummingbird Helper

In our increasingly extreme weather events, the project increased the number of feeders kept active through severe weather (both hot and cold) by supporting the humans who keep feeders. Hummingbirds are completely reliant on human intervention in the snow and cold, and in very hot weather hummingbirds (and all birds) need water sources, which the feeders provide if they are kept fresh and cool. The grant supported the purchase of hummingbird feeder heaters and other supplies as well as a newsletter distributed to approximately 50 homes in the neighbourhood of Falmouth, Easter and Savannah. New neighbourhood connections were built thanks to the project, and countless hummingbirds were helped.

Browning Greenway

This project transformed the entrance of the Browning Greenway at the end of Wordsworth Street which was covered with invasive species and dominated by Himalayan Blackberry and English Ivy. Volunteers from the neighbourhood removed invasives, built up the soil, and planted several native shrubs and plants. As they grow, the native species will flourish and be a much more attractive and appropriate way to enter the greenway and will support local pollinators. The grant supported the purchase of soil, mulch, and native plants. While working on the project, neighbours got to know each other better and talked with many passers-by who offered their thanks for the restoration work.

Going Greener Homes Tour

A walking tour of green initiatives by neighbors in the Quadra Cedar Hill neighbourhood shared with visitors how they made their homes, gardens, and transportation more climate sustainable and lessened their carbon footprint. Between 40 and 60 attendees visited each site and learned about solar arrays, heat pumps, energy conservation, heat loss prevention and evaluation, e bikes / e cars and urban food farming.

Bowker Creek Biodiversity Day

Bowker Creek Biodiversity Day aimed to raise awareness, educate, and communicate a vision for a healthier future for Bowker Creek and the Bowker Creek watershed. It featured presentations focused on nature-based learning and family-oriented activities on the south field of Lansdowne South Secondary School, with Bowker Creek in the immediate vicinity. Information about climate action and emergency preparedness were also shared by community partners. Displays, crafts, and games were designed to share the vision of the Biodiversity Corridor and to demonstrate how supporting the creek and watershed benefits the neighbourhood and community.

Restoring the Pimlott Place Forest

All households in this our cul-de-sac came out to help with invasives removal, planting of native plants from Satinflower nursery, bird house building and painting (kids), and spreading mulch and wood chips to improve a pathway at Pimlott Place. Adding to the fun, an appetizer potluck was held with lots of conversation and laughs.

Columbia Place Easement Restoration

This project brought neighbours together and restored a native species and removed invasives on a multi-unit residence in the Gorge area. The project reduced water dependence, increased native and local plant and wildlife biodiversity, and increased resident use and engagement with local ecosystems. Read more about this project in the [Our Backyard magazine article: Caring for Columbia Place](#).

Camelot Road Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Events

Four events were held for residents of Camelot Road and an adjacent street which covered topics of “Emergency Preparedness 101: Emergency Preparedness Starts with You”, “Climate Change”, “Your Friendly (and Unfriendly) Neighbour Plants” and a final windup event which included feedback on the earlier events. Between 13-17 neighbours attended each event, and they received rave reviews, including: “It was wonderful – thanks so much for organizing this and putting it together!” and “Really enjoyed meeting everyone and learning about the topics we attended!”

“This project brought the neighbourhood together.”

Promotional Activities

N2N was promoted through many of Saanich’s existing channels including:

- Saanich website, which provided program information, grant and group workshop application forms, ideas and links, and posters and door hangers for residents to use to recruit their group
- Media release
- Saanich Emergency Program presentations
- Climate Quarterly E-Newsletter
- Our Backyard newsletter ([Caring for Columbia Place – the Power of Community | District of Saanich](#))
- Spotlight newsletter article
- Social media posts
- Emails to all community associations

An article about N2N was also included in a newsletter by the Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership.

A public in-person presentation was held at Cedar Hill Rec Centre in April 2024. It was promoted through multiple channels including those noted above as well as through RecOnline and public events listings. Attendance was quite low (under 10 people) but feedback about the presentation was very positive from attendees.

Grant Applications

A total of 12 grant applications have been received from the program inception to the end of 2024.

- 8 are complete and paid (including one project which completed in early 2025)
- 2 are still in the application stage, with one potentially not proceeding. All the delays are due to our permit and insurance requirements.
- 1 was approved but may not be able to be completed due to combined factors of Saanich's bylaw prohibitions for little libraries and low volunteer capacity. It did not receive an upfront grant, so no repayment is required.
- 1 is in progress with a final report due in 2025.

Grant Disbursements

The grants paid from the program inception to end of 2024 are shown in the table below, with links to their project summaries provided. The grant is up to \$500, and not all projects requested the full grant amount. Conversely, the majority of the projects cost over \$500 and were supplemented with additional funds from the participants.

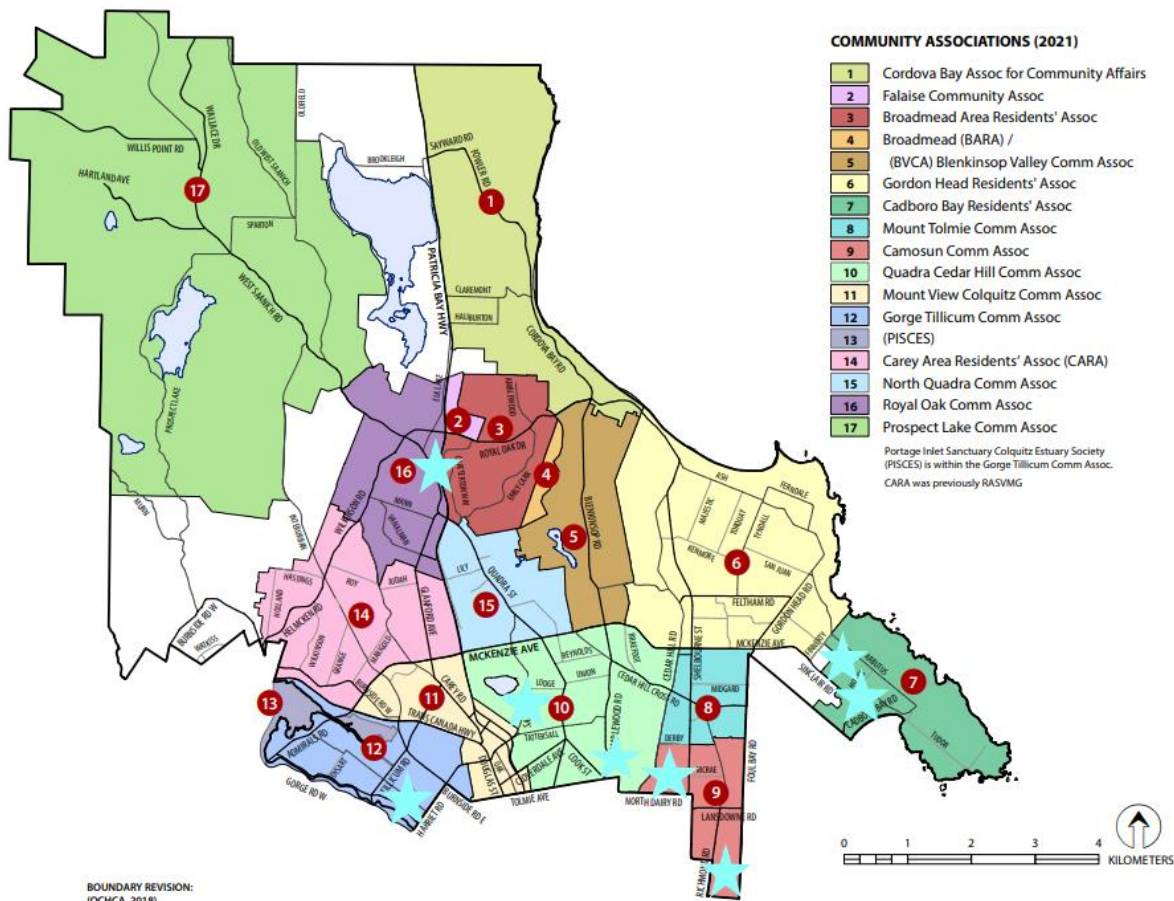
Project	Application Date	Completion Date	Grant Amount
Mystic Vale and Beyond: a wildlife corridor	1-Aug-23	11-Feb-24	\$500.00
Hummingbird Helper	19-Sep-23	10-May-24	\$500.00

Browning Greenway (Part 1)	26-Dec-23	25-Jun-24	\$500.00
Bowker Creek Biodiversity Day	7-Mar-24	31-Oct-24	\$500.00
Going Greener Home Tour	20-Mar-24	10-Sep-24	\$500.00
Easement Restoration Project - Columbia Place	31-Jul-24	11-Feb-25	\$500.00
Neighbour to Neighbour on Camelot Road	2-Apr-24	3-Sep-24	\$137.65
Restoring the Pimlott Place Forest	29-Mar-24	11-Oct-24	\$495.08
Total			\$3,632.73

Geographical Distribution

Projects by 8 groups have been completed in 5 different Saanich neighbourhoods, as shown by the blue stars on the map in Figure 1 below. All the projects have taken place within the Urban Containment Boundary.

Figure 1: Completed N2N Project by Neighbourhood



Residential Building Types

Most applications have been from single-family and ground-oriented neighbourhoods, except for one completed project and one in progress project to date located in strata multi-unit buildings.

Feedback from Participants

Feedback received from participants was very positive overall. Final reports submitted shared stories of potlucks, intergenerational learning, laughter, and feeling good about the projects completed. Specific feedback included:

- Great way for neighbours to get together and learn more about each other as well as the topics covered in the presentations
- Hope Saanich will continue to undertake this program
- Thank you for your support for our event

- Two neighbours who [participated in the project] were strangers to me [...]. We now exchange conversations and pleasantries when we see each other in the neighbourhood.

Recommendations for improvement in the N2N program included:

- Additional help from Saanich Parks with the delivery of soil and mulch for restoration projects would allow the group to spend money on more plants rather than soil.
- Additional communication from Saanich Engineering about construction work happening in the road adjacent to the event venue at a park.
- Help with completing boulevard permit applications and faster boulevard permit application times
- Remove the requirement for accessing insurance for a street/block party event (the process was seen as too confusing an application process to proceed for one group).
- Larger grants could help with bigger projects.
- Increase the geographical area from 3 blocks to a wider neighbourhood area.

Program goals

Overall, the program is meeting its goals of improving neighbourhood resilience through helping neighbours to get to know each other better. This improves their resilience in emergencies. Projects involved anywhere from a dozen to hundreds of participants each. Residents completing projects to improve care for nature, emergency preparedness, and climate action supports goals of the Saanich Emergency Program, Sustainability Division, and PRCS Department. Summaries of completed programs have been compiled online at [N2N Completed Projects | District of Saanich](#). The grants have been used by participants responsibly, with no concerns about misuse of funds and acceptable final reports received for all those who received funds.

Staff Time

This program involves the following departments and divisions:

- Fire – Emergency Program
- Corporate Services – Sustainability
- Parks, Recreation and Community Services – Parks

The program also involves the Finance department for the final grant approval and the Engineering Department and the Parks Department for reviewing Boulevard Permits which are often required for N2N projects taking on ecological restoration work. The program has at times also involved the Community Services Division for questions

about special event block party insurance. Communications also supports promotion of the program.

Participation targets

The program has a budget of \$5000 per year, unless modified by Council, which is enough for 10 projects a year if all groups access the maximum grant amount. In 2024 only 8 grants were paid out, meaning we are 2 groups short of our yearly target. This is an improvement over 2023 which was underspent with only three groups applying in 2023 and zero paid out until 2024. Increased promotion should be conducted in 2025 to see if the 10 projects per year target can be reached as well as making up for the missed targets in previous years. Efforts can be made to promote the program to those neighborhoods who have not yet accessed the grant, and through channels that reach strata councils, co-ops, and renters to better reach those building and ownership types.

Total Funds Available

The N2N grant was created by modifying Council Policy for the previous Small Acts of Vibrancy Community Micro Grant. That micro grant fund had not been accessed as much as budgeted for several years. Approximately \$18,500 is currently in the account. This is enough for 37 additional groups to access the full \$500 grant. Additional promotional efforts can be used to increase participation rates in the program. Changes to the program such as increasing the grant amounts and/or creating additional neighbourhood resilience programs can also be considered for Council approval to ensure existing funds are well used for their intended purposes.