Saanich Neighbour to Neighbour (N2N) Resilience Initiative

Summary of Program Activities

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May 2026

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1.0 Background

This report provides an overview of the District of Saanich Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Initiative (N2N) program and the results delivered to date, alongside recommendations for future improvements.

1.1 Program overview

Through the N2N program, 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.

1.2 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. This process has remained consistent in 2024 and 2025.

1.3 Roles & responsibilities

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.

1.4 Funding & participation targets

The program has a budget of $5,000 per year, unless modified by Council, which is enough for 10 projects a year if all groups access the maximum $500 grant amount.

Unspent funds used to accumulate year over year, but as of the 2026 budget they no longer roll over into the following year. Therefore, under the current structure the cap of 10 projects per year is finite.

1.5 Program promotion

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
- Saanich Emergency Program presentations
- Climate Quarterly E-Newsletter
- Our Backyard newsletter
- Spotlight newsletter article
- Social media posts
- Emails to all community associations

The N2N program was also featured in the annual Climate Plan report card.

2.0 Program Results to Date

2.1 Completed projects

A total of 14 projects have been completed since the N2N grant program inception, as shown in Table 1 below. Additionally, at the time of writing, there are also two projects in progress that have been approved for grants and two proposals in the review and approval stage.

Table 1: Completed N2N Projects

Project	Application Date	Completion Date	Grant Amount	Emergency Prep*	Nature	Climate**
Mystic Vale and Beyond: a wildlife corridor	1-Aug-23	11-Feb-24	$500.00	x	x	x
Hummingbird Helper	19-Sep-23	10-May-24	$500.00	x	x	
Browning Greenway Restoration (Part 1)	26-Dec-23	25-Jun-24	$500.00	x	x	x
Bowker Creek Biodiversity Day	7-Mar-24	31-Oct-24	$500.00	x	x	x
Going Greener Home Tour	20-Mar-24	10-Sep-24	$500.00	x	x	xx
Easement Restoration Project - Columbia Place (Part 1)	31-Jul-24	11-Feb-25	$500.00	x	x	x
Neighbour to Neighbour on Camelot Road	2-Apr-24	3-Sep-24	$137.65	xx	x	xx
Restoring the Pimlott Place Forest	29-Mar-24	11-Oct-24	$495.08	x	x	x
Marsett Place Emergency Preparedness Initiative	17-Apr-24	2-Apr-25	$244.43	xx		x
Browning Greenway Restoration (Part 2)	5-Dec-24	3-Sep-25	$500.00	x	x	x
Downham Place Neighbourhood Gathering	17-Apr-25	28-May-25	$311.27	x		xx
Frank Hobbs Bike Bus	28-Feb-25	30-Jun-25	$500.00	x		xx
Dysart Road Neighbourhood Party	18-Aug-25	28-Sep-25	$500.00	x		x
Butteryflyway at UVic Family Housing	7-Oct-25	27-Apr-26	$500.00	x	x	x
Total			**$6,188.43**	**2 (14)**	**10**	**4 (14)**

**Emergency preparedness includes getting to know neighbours better, so is included in all completed projects and noted with an "x". An explicit focus on emergency preparedness content was included in two projects and noted with "xx".*

***Climate adaptation includes ecosystem restoration work, which is noted with an "x". Climate mitigation content is noted with an "xx" and was included in four projects.*

As shown in Figure 1, the completed projects have taken place in eight different Saanich neighbourhoods. Two stratas and one townhouse rental complex have participated, with the remainder of projects taking place in primarily detached home neighbourhoods.

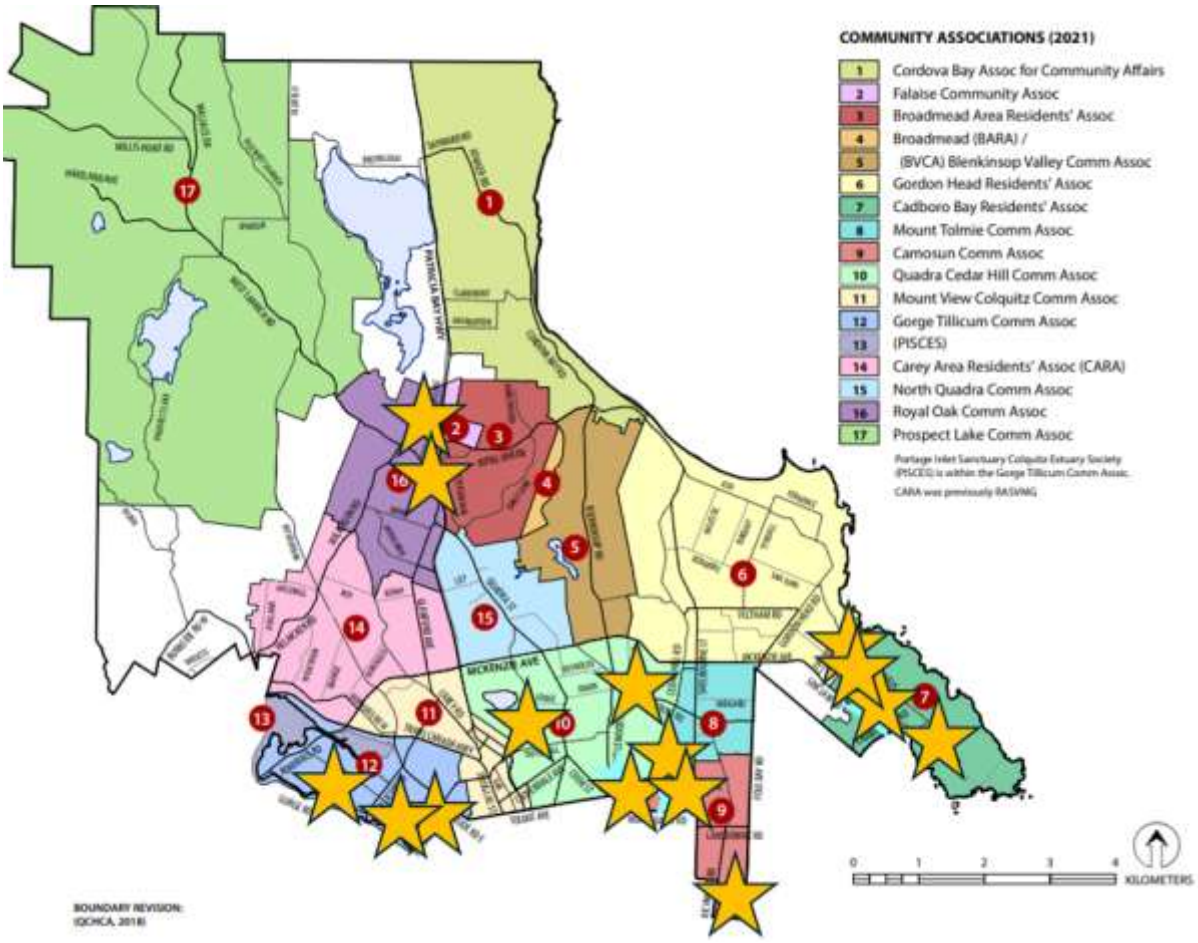


Figure 1: Geographical distribution of completed N2N projects

2.2 Participation rates

In 2025, seven grants were paid out, with some of these grants being for an amount less than the maximum $500 grant available. This is a similar participation rate compared to 2024 when eight grants were paid out, and an improvement over 2023 which had only three groups applying in 2023 and zero paid out until 2024. This demonstrates that at this time there is some funding capacity available before the full annual allocation is met.

2.3 2025 project highlights

All completed project summaries from grant program inception are available on the Saanich website at N2N Completed Projects | District of Saanich. Completed projects from 2025 are included below.

Camelot Road Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Events – Completed September 2024
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:

"It was wonderful – thanks so much for organizing this and putting it together! Really enjoyed meeting everyone and learning about the topics we attended!"
"This project brought the neighbourhood together."

The Emergency Preparedness workshop was led by Saanich Emergency Program staff and volunteers. The Climate Change workshop was led by Dr. Michael Eby and covered the current state of climate science, the actions that are being taken at the national, provincial and municipal level, and what households can do to contribute. Dr. Barbara Hawkins led a workshop on native and invasive plants. A scavenger hunt in Haro Woods helped young and old learn plant identification with iNaturalist.

Dysart Neighbourhood Party - Completed September 2025
About 50 neighbours gathered for a party where parents and kids got to meet people in the neighbourhood while starting conversations about emergency preparedness and nature education. The group provided Emergency Planning books, got to know skills and needs in the community relating to emergency preparedness, and learned about nature, all while enjoying refreshments and plenty of kid-pleasing bubbles. About 20 households put down their information regarding emergency skills and needs. We also had one gentleman join the party who lives in the neighbourhood who uses a wheelchair and now we know to check on him in cases of emergency and general staying in contact. Lots of new connections have happened, and after the party more are people talking on the street and kids saying hi to each other that didn't know each other before the gathering.

Marsett Place Emergency Preparedness Initiative - Completed April 2025
Three strata properties worked together to increase community resilience to many types of hazards including those worsened by climate change. The group developed plans to help each other in emergencies, became more prepared by getting to know their neighbours, promoted resident knowledge of the Saanich Emergency Program, and improved the resilience of people and nature to climate change.

Downham Place Neighbourhood Party
- Completed May 2025
This neighbourhood party was the first of hopefully many get togethers for the community. Downham Place has a number of new people and the party allowed neighbours to meet each other, often for the first time. Of the 16 households invited, 8 participated and 4 others expressed interest but could not make it this time. A head count produced 20 adults and 8 kids. The party lasted about 3 ½ hours and all expressed their appreciation of the get-together and getting to know each other. Some interest was expressed in a monthly less-formal gathering and at least an annual dinner/BBQ.

Kids played hockey together, and a “free” table was introduced as a way of reducing waste and consumerism. A group chat list was started which will be used to advertise future events, tool sharing and hopefully further conversations around reducing carbon footprints through heat pumps, solar and similar. A map with peoples' names and addresses was made to facilitate closer relations. A compost and recycling station was used throughout.

Frank Hobbs Bike Bus
- Completed June 2025
The Frank Hobbs Bike Bus was "wildly successful" according to the organizers, and made a larger impact than they had anticipated. The project provided a weekly bike bus in the Cadboro Bay neighbourhood to Frank Hobbs School. A Bike Bus is a community-organized ride that meets regularly to ride to school. Students who walk or cycle to school are more attentive in class, and exhibit higher academic achievement and lower levels of stress than students who are driven in cars. By providing a safe, fun environment for cycling, bike busses reinforce positive behaviours in students who regularly ride, and encourage new habits in students and families who do not regularly ride.

Browning Greenway Part 2
- Completed September 2025
This project sought out to transform 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. Parts 1 and 2 restored areas on either end of a bridge. 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. 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.

UVic Family Housing Butterflyway Garden Party
- Completed April 2026
The University of Victoria Family Housing ButterflyWay Garden Party 2026 was a great success! About 30 people attended to tour a butterflyway garden with over 70 native

species. Guests met each other and learned about plant propagation, identifying native pollinator plants, how to use iNaturalist, sourcing local wild foods, vermicomposting, bokashi fermenting, compost tea, and more! Activities for kids were very popular. The project lead explained that after visiting "at least 3 people committed to trading out their commercial flowers for native species. I also gave them a source of native flowers (my garden). I feel that the party was a success because, although I have lived here for 5 years and know the majority of my neighbours, I actually knew less than half of the visitors. It brought together many people who formerly did not know each other."

2.4 Feedback from participants

The final project report template specifically asks for feedback about the program. Not all reports included feedback and suggestions, but the suggestions received in 2025 are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Feedback on N2N received in final project reports in 2025

“I thought this was a very good strategy about building community. This neighbourhood in particular can be very isolating because all of the neighbours are from different parts of the world and speak different languages and have very different customs. The unifying aspect is that we are all students and parents, however, that makes all of us very busy and it is hard to get to know our neighbours. This was a very good party and got many households together.”
“Our first year has been wildly successful, and made a larger impact than I had anticipated.”
“No suggestions or feedback, just really glad this is available in our community and hopeful to do it again next year!”
“Having learned that I can only receive 2 N2N grants was a little bit disappointing. I feel if Saanich residents are volunteering their own time to improve the natural environment and enhance community engagement there should not be a limit and instead projects should be awarded on merit.”
• “It is good to have initiatives in the community to promote Emergency Preparedness. I think the program could be more attractive with a larger budget for planning teams looking to purchase emergency supplies (not food and water) like generators, first aid level two kits, emergency lighting, stationary supplies, pop up shelters, etc. For example, in 2022 at Royal Links South, 90% of the emergency equipment purchased by the strata in the storage shed was stolen. An insurance deductible did not cover costs and we were then required to have to go and purchase replacement equipment taken again out of our strata council budget. Some financial assistance would have benefited the strata with funds made available from the Saanich Emergency Program. As this initiative states, we are trying to lessen the burden of service to our strata by the district when an emergency, catastrophic in nature, occurs by being equipped and prepared.”

- "As you will read in this report, work continues and more work can be done engaging additional strata to be involved. A simplified PART TWO, 2025 initiative continuance process would be helpful based on the results, accomplishments and goals met from this initiative. Thank you for your kind support and considerations to these suggestions."

Overall the feedback was very positive, with some suggestions to allow groups to apply more than twice and/or to access larger incentives.

3.0 Summary & Recommendations

Overall, the Saanich N2N program is meeting its goals of improving neighbourhood resilience by helping neighbours to get to know each other better, which improves their resilience in emergencies. Projects that improve care for nature, emergency preparedness, and climate action also support goals of the Saanich Emergency Program, Sustainability Division, and the Parks Division and contribute to the Saanich Strategic Plan.

The grants have been used by participants responsibly, with no concerns about misuse of funds. Acceptable final reports have been received for all those who received funds.

Increased promotion should be conducted in 2026, while keeping the maximum grant amount at $500 and monitoring the uptake against the $5,000 annual budget. 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.

If additional funds can be found, it is recommended that additional promotion and facilitation targeted at rental apartments should be implemented in order to increase equitable access to the program. For example, this could include promotion through the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods Connect and Prepare program or similar.

In future years, consideration should be given to increasing the maximum grant amount per project, the number of times groups may access the program, and how the N2N integrates with future Parks programs that are currently in development.