

FOR: FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: April 15, 2026

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: **COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT GRANT**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present to the Finance and Audit Committee the recommended Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant allocations for 2026.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommends that Council approve a total of \$20,000, in accordance with the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines and Criteria, and that the grant allocations be as follows:

1. Beaufort Community Gardens - \$1,500
Project: The Beaufort Bee Happy Garden
2. Light House Sustainability Society - \$3,000
Project: Building Materials Drive - Nanaimo Reuse Challenge
3. Nanaimo & Areas Land Trust - \$2,000
Project: Nanaimo Old City Pollinator Pathway Project
4. Nanaimo Community Gardens - \$2,000
Project: Project at Beban Park and Pine Street
5. Nanaimo Climate Action Hub - \$3,000
Project: Nanaimo Climate Connections
6. Repair Café Nanaimo - \$2,000
Project: Repair Café Nanaimo
7. Rock City Neighbourhood Association - \$2,000
Project: Rock City Community Nursery
8. Synergy - \$2,500
Project: Small Business, Big Impact: Greening Trades and Construction in Nanaimo
9. Broombusters Invasive Plant Society - \$2,000
Project: Broom Removal Nanaimo Parkway

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT GRANT**BACKGROUND**

On 2023-SEP-25, Council endorsed the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines and Criteria (attached).

The purpose of the grant is to support small environmental sustainability and climate projects that aim to improve the environmental health of natural systems, enhance residents' connections to nature, provide educational values, and contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation.

The grant can provide up to \$5,000 per project for eligible projects not already supported by another City of Nanaimo grant. A total of \$20,000 in funding is available for this grant intake.

The evaluation of applications involved an integrated review committee with Staff from Sustainability; Parks, Recreation and Culture; and Finance.

DISCUSSION

Fourteen Community Environmental Sustainability Project (CESP) Grant applications were received. A total of \$53,240 was requested, which is \$33,240 more than the available grant funding. An additional application to host a watercourse community workshop was received but directed to the Community Watershed Restoration Grant and will be considered as part of that grant review. This was the most applications the City has received for this grant type in a single intake to date. Staff are recommending a total of \$20,000 be allocated to nine applicants as follows:

| # | Applicant | Project | Requested | Recommended |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Beaufort Community Gardens | The Beaufort Bee Happy Garden | \$1,000 | \$1,500 |
| 2 | Fresh Start | Community Cleanup and Waste Diversion Support Program | \$5,000 | \$0 |
| 3 | Harewood Neighbourhood Association | Georgia Greenway Project | \$3,400 | \$0 |
| 4 | Light House Society | Building Materials Drive | \$5,000 | \$3,000 |
| 5 | Nanaimo Area Land Trust | Nanaimo Old City Pollinator Patchway Project | \$2,000 | \$2,000 |
| 6 | Nanaimo Community Gardens | Beban Park Project | \$4,000 | \$2,000 |
| 7 | Nanaimo Climate Action Hub | Nanaimo Climate Connections | \$5,000 | \$3,000 |
| 8 | Repair Café Nanaimo | Repair Café Nanaimo | \$4,690 | \$2,000 |
| 9 | Rock City Neighbourhood Association | Rock City Community Nursery | \$2,650 | \$2,000 |
| 10 | South End Community Association | Greening the Burt: South End Street Planters | \$5,000 | \$0 |
| 11 | Synergy | Small, Business, Big Impact: Greening Trades and Construction | \$3,500 | \$2,500 |
| 12 | West Coast Sober Living | Roots in Recovery | \$5,000 | \$0 |

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|----|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 13 | Surfrider Foundation | Beach Clean Ups | \$5,000 | \$0 |
| 14 | Broombusters Invasive Plant Society | Broom Removal Nanaimo and Parkway | \$2,000 | \$2,000 |
| | Total | | \$53,240 | \$20,000 |

1. The Beaufort Bee Happy Garden application is to create a 288 square foot pollinator garden within the Beaufort Community Garden. The review committee noted that while the project was small, it can have a big impact and directly addresses CityPlan goals related to pollinators. The committee felt the project budget undervalues the cost of plants and planter boxes needed for the project; as such, they chose to award an additional \$500, beyond the applicant's request.
2. The Community Cleanup and Waste Diversion Support Program provides low-barrier cleanup services to address litter, illegal dumping, and accumulated waste in City of Nanaimo residential areas, public spaces, and “vulnerable locations”. Fresh Start is a newly established society with little history of environmental action in Nanaimo. The application did not connect strongly with CityPlan Green Goals, and the review committee felt the application may be better suited for a Social Development Grant.
3. The Harewood Neighbourhood Association is proposing to enhance the section of the Georgia Greenway between Sixth Street and the Chase River pedestrian bridge, with ecologically focused public art and the planting of “indigenous and ecologically appropriate species.” The application was phased, with public art being the focus of the 2026 project. The review committee noted a lack of space for planting within the area proposed and felt more information regarding the proposed public art was needed to help understand the arts connection to the CityPlan Green goals.
4. The City previously funded the Lighthouse Society’s Building Material Exchange program in 2024. An event was held in November 2024, at White Sails Brewery to match companies with surplus materials to those that may be able to reuse them. The 2026 proposal builds on this work to develop a “coordinated, community-facing building materials donation campaign” to mobilize local homeowners and contractors to donate salvaged and excess construction materials to Habitat for Humanity’s recently expanded ReStore location in Nanaimo.
5. The Nanaimo Area Land Trust partnered with the Nanaimo Old City Association to submit an application to help transition patches of private property in the Old City into pollinator gardens, creating a connected “pollinator pathway.” The review committee was impressed with the application and noted the program could be expanded into other areas of the City if successful.
6. The Nanaimo Community Garden Society is proposing sustainability-focused improvements to their gardens at Beban Park and on Pine Street. The committee felt the construction of a pond didn’t connect well with the CityPlan green goals. No maintenance plan was provided. The committee noted that while native plants are generally lower maintenance than non-native species, they do require some maintenance. The committee did note that other aspects of the application connected with CityPlan goals related to promoting pollinators and native plants.
7. The Nanaimo Climate Action Hub (NCAH) hosted a successful Nanaimo Climate Connections event in 2025 that saw 250 people attend engaging conference-style presentations and

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workshops related to climate change. The event was funded in part by a previous Community Environmental Sustainability Project grant. NCAH plans to host a similar event in 2027. Given the amount of work it takes for the volunteers to plan the event, NCAH felt it was necessary to apply in 2026 for a 2027 event in order to guarantee funding and allow them more time to prepare. The review committee was impressed with the success of last year's event but had some concerns regarding the application budget and funding an event in 2027.

8. The Repair Café is a new initiative for Nanaimo that builds on the work of repair cafes in other cities. The applicants plan to host repair café events where Nanaimo residents can learn how to repair and extend the life of their products rather than dispose of them and buy new material. The committee liked the concept and noted it supports CityPlan goals related to waste management and circular economy principles. St. Andrew's church has donated their space to host events. Given the free event space provided, the committee did not support the applicant's request for funds for insurance or for a contingency venue. The committee also noted the group is brand new, has no history of working with the City or environmental action as a group, does not participate in Acting for Climate Together, and has not yet formed as a society or non-profit.
9. The Rock City Neighbourhood Association previously received funding to support hosting Seed to Table workshops in the neighbourhood. That event has helped the neighbourhood association create a community nursery with plant seedlings available for residents to take home to their own garden. They applied for funding in 2026 to continue to develop the community nursery, add to their tool lending library, and continue to host local food-based neighbourhood learning events. Staff were impressed with their application but would have liked more details about the previous Seed to Table events included in the application.
10. The South End Community Association has applied for funding to install planters filled with native plants along the 700 block of Haliburton Street. While the project committee appreciated the grassroots neighbourhood level effort to create habitat and improve the aesthetics of the area, the committee was concerned about a lack of a maintenance plan and that the planters may conflict with future City work in the area.
11. The Synergy Foundation is a well-established non-profit based in Victoria that focuses on projects related to a green economy. They applied for a grant to host a 2-to-3-hour event to promote their Green Trades certification and promote circular and low-carbon green building solutions. The project aligns well with the greenhouse gas emission and waste reduction goals of CityPlan.
12. West Coast Sober Living is a newly established non-profit that applied for a grant to establish a learning garden for residents in recovery at their Nanaimo facility. While the committee was impressed with the quality of the application, the application did not connect strongly with CityPlan Green Goals, and the review committee felt the application may be better suited for a Social Development Grant.
13. The Surfrider Foundation is a well-established global non-profit dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans and beaches. They have recently established a chapter in Central Vancouver Island and have applied for grant funding to support beach cleanup activities

in the region. While the review committee supports the organization's fantastic efforts, they noted the application included a number of activities outside the City of Nanaimo, did not connect to the CityPlan green goals, and had some concerns about identifying which funds would be used within the City boundaries.

14. The Broombusters Invasive Plant Society has previously received CESP grant funding from the City in 2023 and 2025. The funding was used to manage a gap in the funding the society receives from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to remove broom from along the Nanaimo Parkway. The city grant will be used to remove broom from City of Nanaimo-owned property not covered by the MOTI funding. The review committee recognized the importance of the society's work and fully supports the grant application, but recommend the society seeks a more sustainable funding source for future work.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A total of \$20,000 has been allotted in the 2026 calendar year to fund Community Environmental Sustainability Project grant applications.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The 2026 grant intake opened on 2026-JAN-30 and remained open until 4:00 pm on 2026-MAR-09.

Grant information was posted on the City's website and advertised through news releases, social media, and direct emails to neighbourhood associations, Acting for Climate Together participants, and community stewardship groups. Staff also held an information session on 2026-FEB-10 to jointly discuss the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant and Community Watershed Restoration Grant guidelines and goals with prospective applicants.

ALIGNMENT WITH CITY PLAN

The report is aligned with the following City goals:

- A Green Nanaimo: Resilient and Regenerative Ecosystems
 - All of the projects recommended for funding are aligned with at least one of the CityPlan Green Goals in sections related to Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction (C1.1), Climate Adaptation (C1.2), Urban Tree Canopy, Natural Areas and Greenways (C1.3), and Solid Waste Management (C1.6).
- A Connected Nanaimo: Equitable Access and Mobility
- A Healthy Nanaimo: Community Wellbeing and Livability
- An Empowered Nanaimo: Reconciliation, Representation and Inclusion
- A Prosperous Nanaimo: Thriving and Resilient Economy

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The report is aligned with the following Council Strategic Framework priorities:

- Implementing City Plan Action Plans and Key City Management Plans
 - Section C1.1.15 of the Integrated Action Plan supports the establishment of a Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant program.
- Social, Health and Public Safety Challenges
- Maintaining and Growing Current Services
- Capital Projects
- Communicating with the Community
- Governance and Corporate Excellence

NEXT STEPS

Pending the Finance and Audit Committee and Council's endorsement of the report's recommendations, the next steps will be to inform the applicants of Council's decision, schedule project kickoff meetings with the successful applicants, and distribute the grant funds in accordance with Council's recommendation.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommends that Council approve a total of \$20,000, in accordance with the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines and Criteria, and that the grant allocations be as follows:
 1. Beaufort Community Gardens - \$1,500
Project: The Beaufort Bee Happy Garden
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Project: Broom Removal Nanaimo Parkway

- The advantages of this option: The recommended funding supports projects that fulfill the criteria of the grant and advance City Plan green goals. Nine proposed projects of higher merit based on fulfilling the guidelines and criteria of the Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant will receive full or partial funding.
- The disadvantages of this option: Some applicants will only receive partial or no funding. Those applicants receiving partial funding may need to scale down their intended project or seek another funding source.
- Financial Implications: The recommendation allocates the full \$20,000 in available project funding.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternate direction. |

KEY MESSAGES

- The Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant was launched in 2023 to support small and creative environmental sustainability and climate projects
- Fourteen Community Environmental Sustainability Project (CESP) Grant applications were received. A total of \$53,240 was requested, which is \$33,240 more than the available grant funding.
- Staff are recommending the full amount of \$20,000 be awarded to nine proposed projects.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Community Environmental Sustainability Project Grant Guidelines and Criteria |

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